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Time and space in *Tristram Shandy*
and other eighteenth-century novels:
the issues of progression and
continuity

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SUMMARY

The thesis argues that the narratives of the eighteenth-century novels selected for this study demonstrate a conscious manipulation of time and space, and that the consequence of this manipulation is to provide the reader with a unique literary journey through the text. The thesis, in its analysis and comparison of these distinctive journeys, chooses to focus on the narrative techniques which facilitate or hamper progression and continuity within the texts. It particularly concentrates on the impact of these narrative techniques on the reading experience.

The first chapter studies and compares texts resorting mainly to the present tense with those predominantly written in the past tense. It examines the effects of the tense used in the narration on the reader's engrossment in the fiction. The second chapter concentrates on the repercussions of the author's choice of a beginning and an ending for his story on the nature of the progression of the narrative. The third chapter is devoted to the destabilising reading journey offered by *Tristram Shandy*. It examines the numerous techniques which react against continuity and progression in time and in space, and the narrator's motivation behind their use. It shows how the narrative choices of *Tristram Shandy* place the reader face to face with his own act of reading. The fourth and final chapter is concerned with the role and the status of fictional footnotes in some eighteenth-century prose fictions. It demonstrates the fictional nature of the footnotes in *Tom Jones*. It argues that fictional footnotes affect the reader's progression across the text in time and in space as well as his understanding of the work of fiction, and this in a fundamental way.

CONTENTS

SUMMARY		i
CONTENTS		ii
ABBREVIATIONS		iii
INTRODUCTION		1
CHAPTER 1	The Present Tense and Willing Suspension of Disbelief	11
CHAPTER 2	Beginnings and Endings	72
CHAPTER 3	<i>Tristram Shandy</i> : The Peculiarities of the Progression of the Narrative	146
CHAPTER 4	Fictional Footnotes in Eighteenth-Century Prose Fiction	198
CONCLUSION		258
BIBLIOGRAPHY		265

ABBREVIATIONS

- ASJ* = Sterne, Laurence, *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy*, Stout, Gardner D. Jr., ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967)
- CL* = Richardson, Samuel, *Clarissa or the History of a Young Lady*, Ross, Angus, ed. (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1985)
- HC* = Smollett, Tobias, *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker*, Knapp, Lewis M., ed., revised by Boucé, Paul-Gabriel (Oxford - New York: Oxford University Press, 1984)
- Letters* = Sterne, Laurence, *Letters of Laurence Sterne*, Curtis, Lewis Perry ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1935)
- MF* = Defoe, Daniel, *The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the Famous Moll Flanders, & C.*, Starr, G. A., ed. (London - Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971)
- Tale* = Swift, Jonathan, *A Tale of A Tub & C.*, Guthkelch, A. C. and D. Nichol Smith, eds. (Oxford: Oxford Clarendon Press, 1920, 2nd edn, 1958)
- TJ* = Fielding, Henry, *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling*, Bowers, Fredson and Martin Battestin eds. (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1974)
- TS* = Sterne, Laurence, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, in *The Florida Edition of the Works of Laurence Sterne*, New, Melvyn and Joan New, eds. (Gainesville: The University Presses of Florida, volumes one and two, 1978; volume three, 1984)

INTRODUCTION

The first half of the eighteenth century is a fascinating cross-road between the influence of the long established occidental philosophy of a man turned towards God, eternity and infinity, and a more recent scientific and materialistic view of a finite man. It also witnesses the emergence of a romantic and subjective movement which gives a central place to man's inner thoughts and feelings. The combination of these trends is the background against which the English novel arises throughout the eighteenth century. As the genre develops, characters are described as individuals against a realistic setting. They are seen performing everyday actions as opposed to heroic and saintly ones. They reveal thoughts and react against circumstances in a way consistent with their personality, rather than representing outside virtues or sins. They evolve in time and space, being conscious of their past and anxious for their future. The form of the narrative also adapts to present the more personal development of actions, thoughts and feelings of the new genre. The perception of the notions of time and space changed through the centuries following the evolution of sciences, philosophy, and religion. By the eighteenth century, with the development of the telescope and the microscope, and Newton's laws of motion, space comes to be seen, like time, as infinite and infinitely divisible.¹ Besides, time is no longer an external factor in men's lives that they cannot reach or control; it has also become part of them. They feel they have a direct, permanent and unique contact with their own continuity, and that the consciousness of any individual can experience, analyse, and master time. Personality then

¹ See Isaac Newton, *The Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy* (London: Benjamin Motte, 1729).

becomes defined by the interpretation of past and present self-awareness. Ian Watt correctly points out that:

Locke had defined personal identity as an identity of consciousness through duration in time; the individual was in touch with his own continuing identity through memory of his past thoughts and actions.²

The thesis proposes to study the concept of time in conjunction with that of space, as they will be shown necessarily to complement each other in textual analysis. Moreover, the meanings of the two terms have evolved closely and have often overlapped throughout history. In fact:

until the seventeenth century the word 'space' had the general meaning of 'extent', and in English, back to the fourteenth century, was used in two main specific senses, one in regard to time, an extent or lapse or interval of time, and the other in respect of linear distance, an extent or interval between two or more points, and consequently also a superficial extent or area.³

According to Locke, individualisation also requires space, so that time and space are logically inseparable even psychologically. In his discussion of duration, he points to the interdependence between the two elements. He explains that 'expansion and duration do mutually embrace and comprehend each other, every part of space being in every part of duration, and every part of duration in every part of expansion'.⁴ The interdependence of time and space is also present in Locke's definition of general ideas, as 'ideas become general by separating them from the circumstances of time and place' (*Essay*, III 3 vi). Thus, we can infer that 'they become particular only when both these circumstances are specified' (*The Rise of the Novel*, p. 21).

² Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel, Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1957), p. 21.

³ Ivor Leclerc, 'The Concept of Space', in *Probability, Time and Space in Eighteenth-Century Literature*, ed. by Paula Backscheider (New York: AMS Press, 1979), pp. 206-218 (p. 209).

⁴ John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding: in Four Books* (London: printed by Eliz. Holt, for Thomas Basset, 1690), II 15 xii.

Written language, the vehicle of the fictional work, is traditionally presented in a linear and sequential way on the page. It is apprehended, in our occidental languages, from left to right and from the top to the bottom of the page.⁵ As a result, reading, and thus the reader's experience of the fictional world, is a complex temporal process which combines the actual reading time, the frequency of the narrative and the temporality of the various fictional personae (narrators and characters). It is also and at the same time a journey through space, the concrete physical space of the page, that of the worlds described in the text, and that of the reader's imagination making sense of and reconfiguring these worlds.⁶

The aspects of the notions of time and space on which the thesis concentrates are those of narrative progression and continuity in a selection of fictional works drawn from the eighteenth century. This study analyses how these narrative techniques influence the reading progress and the reader's engrossment in the story. It draws comparisons between the chosen fictions in order to attain a broader picture of issues which previous critics have partially looked at and mainly developed with regard to individual works. In most of the selected works, the narratorial-pseudo-authorial voice is the catalyst through which the fiction takes shape, and thus the focus of our attention. The self-conscious narrators of these works establish a relationship with their reader and guide or misguide their progress through the text.

Previous studies of the eighteenth-century novel have looked at the cultural, historical, geographical and psychological angles to the study of time and space. Whilst these perspectives are important in their own right, this thesis chooses to adopt what seems to be

⁵ See Robert de Beaugrande, 'The Linearity of Reading: Fact, Fiction, or Frontier?', in *Understanding Reading Comprehension*, ed. by James Flood (Newark, DE: International Reading Association, 1984), 45-74.

⁶ See Paul Ricoeur, *Temps et Récit 2: La configuration dans le récit de fiction* (Paris: Seuil, 1984).

an undervalued critical tool: narratological analysis. The thesis scrutinises the writing mechanisms which carry the reader through the text, and analyses their impact on the reading experience. Thus, the physical and symbolic spaces in which the characters evolve are only mentioned in so far as they are directly relevant to the reader's journey through the narrative. For instance, there is no analysis of the customs of the society against which the fictional characters are described. The thesis does not trace a psychological or philosophical portrait of the characters which would be linked to their struggle through life over time and in specific surroundings. For example, the themes of confinement and freedom, individual and public space, and town versus countryside are not expounded. Finally, there is no attempt at developing the theme of travel writing, and to tie it to past and subsequent trends. The narratological analysis undertaken in the thesis does not of course invalidate contextual study; rather, it attempts to be complementary to such works.

In addition to Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* (1759-67), which lies at the heart of this thesis, the following works were chosen to complement this study. They are landmarks in the development of the English novel and offer a prism of narrative styles within the genre. Swift's *A Tale of a Tub* (1704) is a self-referential satire which questions the rigidity of the order and development of fictional narratives, and which confuses its interpreters on purpose. Although not a novel, it is an enlightening reference to use in the study of both the form and the content of later innovative and satirical novels. Defoe's *Moll Flanders* (1722) is 'widely taught and written about as the first English novel' (MF, p. vii). As such, it forms a crucial basis against which the progress and the idiosyncrasies of subsequent novelists can be measured. As an epistolary novel, *Clarissa* (1747-48) brings a different perspective to the study of self-referential novels. Richardson's masterly handling of the progression of the narrative creates a unique involvement of the reader in the temporality and the

development of the characters. The role of time and space in the making and the development of *Tom Jones* (1749) can be studied both in the story of its protagonists and in the large sections devoted to the narrator's exposition of his work, thus offering the reader a twofold approach to his experience of the fiction. In *A Sentimental Journey* (1768) the evolution of the protagonist travelling in search of improvement and the particular progression of his narration transforms the reader's traditional expectations of character development and of the geography of travelling. Finally, *Humphry Clinker* (1771) is approached to offer an insight into the problem of cyclical narratives.

Tristram Shandy (1759-67) is a work imbued with and shaped by literary traditions. It encompasses but also parodies a multitude of literary genres and styles, past and contemporary. Furthermore, as the English novel was still evolving, Sterne drew it to the brink of destruction. Consequently, the text powerfully attracts the reader's attention to its form, to the writing process, and to its pseudo-creator at the centre of the literary creation, thereby constituting a fascinating case of study for the thesis. Gérard Genette analyses in detail the forms of narrative discourse in the texts of modern French novels, in particular in Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*.⁷ In *Figures III* and *Nouveau Discours du Récit*, he deals with literary techniques which are directly relevant to this study, as for example those of narrative order, duration, tempo and reiteration, discourse, perspective, narration and diegetical levels. In *Seuils*, he undertakes the study of the world around the text, the 'paratexte'.⁸ His detailed analyses and precise definitions of narrative techniques are methodologically interesting in the study of the complex textual phenomena found in

⁷ Marcel Proust, *A la recherche du temps perdu*, texte établi par Pierre Clarac et André Ferré, collection de la Pléiade, (Paris: Gallimard, t. I: nov. 1955; II: janv. 1956; III: mai 1956).

⁸ Gérard Genette, *Figures III* (Paris: Seuil, 1972); *Nouveau Discours du Récit* (Paris: Seuil, 1983); *Seuils* (Paris: Seuil, 1987).

Tristram Shandy. Genette's highly technical and analytical approach to narratology is underused in the study of English literature, and in particular in the study of texts of the eighteenth century. Genette offers precise and detailed narratological tools, whereas Rimmon-Kennan and Chatman, for instance, present broader pictures of literary phenomena.⁹ In addition to Genette's influence, the thesis also uses many French critical articles and books which give a close text analysis of the works studied, and offer a different perspective on the texts to that of the Anglo-Saxon critics.

In addition, Iser's reader response theories in *The Act of Reading* and *The Implied Reader*, aptly shift the perception of written fiction as an object to be studied from the outside, or to be simply internalised, to that of a 'dynamic *interaction* between text and reader'.¹⁰ Iser analyses the processes of the reader's involvement in the fictional text and the mechanisms which lead both to 'illusion-forming and illusion-breaking' (*The Act of Reading*, p. 127). Whilst reader response theories have mainly been used on fictional texts of the twentieth century, especially when concentrating on illusion-breaking techniques, the thesis applies Iser's analytical tools to the chosen eighteenth-century works, as they aptly complement our narratological study of the techniques which contribute to textual progression and continuity. The thesis focuses on Iser's perspective on fiction and the act of reading, rather than on the issues raised by his theories themselves or in relation to other contemporary reader response theories.

⁹ Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978); and Shlomith Rimmon-Kennan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* (London: Routledge, 1983).

¹⁰ Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1978), p. 107; *The Implied Reader* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1974).

In the first chapter, the thesis examines how the choice of tenses used in the narration has an impact on the absorption of the reader into the fictional world. To that effect, this study compares the type of referential illusion found in narratives which are mainly written in the past tense, such as *Moll Flanders* and *Tom Jones*, with that of narratives which resort predominantly to the present tense, such as *Tristram Shandy* and *Clarissa*. A distinction is made between the effect of the present tense in *Tristram Shandy*, which places its narrator-pseudo-author and his pseudo-creation centre stage, and in *Clarissa*, which concentrates on the rendition of events and emotions in an intense and complex quasi-immediate temporality.

The second chapter looks at how the move away from a narrative structure based on causality and resolution reflects on the choice of the beginning and the ending of a story and on the nature of the progression of the fiction. In the first instance, the thesis investigates suspense and the sense of fate in *Moll Flanders* and *Tom Jones*, where the development of the plot tends towards a resolution. This chapter then reflects on the consequences of the length, the pace, and the complex temporality of *Clarissa* on the movement towards completion and on the act of reading. This study also argues that in *Humphry Clinker*, despite the happy ending and the cyclical aspect of the development of the story, the movement towards a satisfactory resolution is thwarted. The thesis side-tracks the main critical trends which emphasise the fragmentation of the text by searching for elements of continuity and progression in *A Sentimental Journey*. It explains how Sterne successfully conveys a sense of geographical progression and of a learning process in a text where, as it is more usually emphasised by critics, the evocation of furtive moments of emotion prevails on the notion of plot. At the end of this chapter, the thesis seeks to give an

overall view of the much-written-about issue of the ending of *Tristram Shandy*, whilst acknowledging the unique complexity of the progression of the narrative.

To that end, the third chapter tries to establish what makes the reading of *Tristram Shandy* so central an image of a destabilising journey. This study suggests that the narrator's games with chronology and sequentiality 'defamiliarize' the act of reading. It establishes that there is a powerful movement against completion, and gives a detailed analysis of the reasons for this movement and of the shapes it takes. This chapter also looks at the techniques which prevent the progression of the narrative into a continuous and homogeneous story line. It concentrates on the consequences of these techniques on the text and on the reading process. In essence, it attempts to show that *Tristram Shandy* is a text on the border between a powerful recreation of reality, the exposition of its artificiality, and its constant deconstruction. The thesis provides a way of understanding how the progression of the narrative affects the process of characterisation and gives it unique characteristics of spatiality. Aside from examining the disturbances in the narrative progression, the thesis argues further that *Tristram Shandy* is an open-ended text which raises a multitude of questions which are left unanswered, and paints portraits by strokes for the imagination to develop. In the light of this, the thesis questions the validity of the convention of rounding up a story towards a particular ending. This study mainly argues that Sterne provides a text which forces the reader to reflect on what happens to language and to the act of reading.

The last chapter of the thesis concentrates on a novel approach to the study of narrative progression and continuity, that of the interplay of text and paratext in self-referential works. It considers the effect of their interaction on the way the reader physically and mentally perceives fiction on the page. This chapter establishes the criteria which are conducive to the emergence and the effectiveness of fictional paratext. It takes as its focus

fictional footnotes and gives a brief historical account of their appearance on the page. Mainly, the thesis offers a broader and also more detailed picture of the nature and function of fictional footnotes in eighteenth-century fictional works than has previously been undertaken. Firstly, it argues against Genette's dismissal of the footnotes in *Tom Jones* as 'auctoriales'. It establishes the fictional nature of the paratext in *Tom Jones*, and analyses in detail the different types and functions of the footnotes. The complex dialogical and spatial relationships between text, marginal notes, and footnotes and their effect on the reading process are examined in *A Tale of a Tub*. Finally, the study of the footnotes in *Tristram Shandy* questions the relevance of external references in a fictional work and invalidates the usefulness of cross-references. The thesis proceeds to argue that, contrary to Genette's opinion, it is a more rewarding experience to read all footnotes as fictional in Sterne's text. This chapter also demonstrates how the mock-battle for authority between the footnotes and the main text in *Tristram Shandy* and in the *Tale* directly affects the reader. The thesis then argues that the presence of fictional footnotes breaks the linearity of the narrative. As a consequence, fictional footnotes open a new time line and a new space into which the fiction can expand, thereby creating an illusion of polyphony. Finally, the thesis demonstrates how fictional footnotes bring about the collapse of the traditional hierarchical relationship between text and paratext.

The thesis as a whole will be seen to have examined various aspects of narrative time and space which facilitate or hamper the reader's progress through the chosen texts of fiction. It will have achieved this by concentrating on the tenses used in narration and on the types of narratorial voices, by studying the narrative devices linked with the progression, the continuity and the beginning and end of those texts, and by examining fiction at the margin of the text. This detailed narrative study will have attempted to capture

a few of the elements which contribute to Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* having been, since its first publication, a fascinating source of inspiration to adventurous novelists.

CHAPTER ONE

The present tense and willing suspension of disbelief

The illusion of immediacy to a reader of novels is not as direct as it is to the audience of a theatre play where actors, made of flesh and blood, perform life-like actions. The reader of novels can participate in an action or identify with a character through his imagination guided only by the words on the page, without any sound or image. Yet, this means is very vivid, and sometimes even more satisfactory, since the reader's participation in the configuration of the text is a very active process whereby he is not only a spectator of the story written by another but, at the same time and fundamentally, the main player.¹ Gérard Genette reminds us that: 'le temps du récit est un "pseudo-temps" en ce qu'il consiste empiriquement, pour le lecteur, en un espace de texte que seule la lecture peut reconvertir en durée'.² Thus, when the reader opens a work of fiction he chooses, to some extent, to abandon the present in which he lives, and the space around him, in order to embrace the

¹ Paul Ricoeur reminds us that, it is only in the act of reading that the dynamics of configuration reaches the end of its course ('c'est seulement dans la lecture que le dynamisme de configuration achève son parcours'); he states that without the reader alongside the text, there is no configuration taking place, and without the reader taking ownership of the text, there is no world unfolding from the text ('sans lecteur qui l'accompagne, il n'y a point d'acte configurant à l'œuvre dans le texte; et sans lecteur qui se l'approprie, il n'y a point de monde déployé devant le texte'). My translation of Paul Ricoeur, *Temps et Récit 3: Le temps raconté* (Paris: Seuil, 1985), pp. 286, 297.

² Gérard Genette, *Nouveau Discours du Récit* (Paris: Seuil, 1983), p.16.

chronotope of the story.³ The reader's journey through the text and his absorption in the fictional world takes a different shape according to the narrators' manipulation of the tenses.

In *Moll Flanders*, the narrator, Moll, tells the story of a distant past from the point of view of a reformed character who has grown old and changed a great deal, so that experiencing the text in an imaginary present can be seen as a major effort. Most of Moll's text is told in the past tense and composed of brief scenes and synopses. The summaries link the main episodes together and fill in for the parts of her life that she consciously omits, such as what happens to her just before her transportation, and what becomes of her numerous children.⁴ There are some notable short cuts in her story; for instance Moll's marriage to her first husband:

It concerns the Story in hand very little, to enter into the farther particulars of the Family, or of myself, for the five Years that I liv'd with this Husband; only to observe that I had two Children by him, and that at the end of five Years he Died. (*MF*, p. 58)

For the major part of the story, the reader has very little time to get engrossed in a situation. His attention is not sustained for very long, but the short scenes are nevertheless very vivid. In addition, reporting of the characters' speech tends more towards abbreviated summary of what was said than direct, indirect, or 'free indirect' presentation of the actual words. Moll's summaries often include her reflections on the various stages of her life as well as a

³ The Greek etymology of the word 'chronotope' means time (chronos) and space (topos). I use it here as a concise way of referring to the two inseparable aspects of the world of the story, time and space. Bakhtin's sees the chronotope operating on three levels: 'first, as the means by which a text represents history; second, as the relation between images of time and space in the novel, out of which any representation of history must be constructed; and third, as a way of discussing the formal properties of the text itself, its plot, narrator, and relations to other texts' (Sue Vice, *Introducing Bakhtin* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), pp. 201-02). Of the three levels, my use of the word would be closer to the third.

⁴ Daniel Defoe, *The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the Famous Moll Flanders, & C.*, ed. by G. A. Starr (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 295. All further quotations from this edition of *Moll Flanders* will be referred to in the main text as *MF*.

few comments on her narrative, on herself as a writer and on the role of the reader. Her comments form occasional brackets in the continuity of the story of her life and are very short (usually one or two sentences). Very few are in the present tense, and they do not break the continuity of the narration in the past. They are uttered by Moll as the story-writer: 'I am the more particular in this part, that if my Story comes to be read by any innocent young Body, they may learn from it to Guard themselves against the Mischiefs which attend an early Knowledge of their own Beauty' (*MF*, p. 24); 'I am drawing now towards a new Variety of the Scenes of Life' (*MF*, p. 269). *Moll Flanders* is a fictional autobiography, so that Moll is both the teller and the main subject of her tale, what Gérard Genette calls an autodiegetical narrator (my translation).⁵ Thus, Moll's asides on the content and the form of the text and her authorial intentions blend in with the style of the rest of the narrative. They help to reinforce the illusion of authenticity of her story. Moll occasionally reminds her reader that she writes for his edification, but that she leaves it to him to reflect upon it by himself. So we read, for example: 'The Moral, indeed of all my History is left to be gather'd by the Senses and Judgement of the Reader' (*MF*, p. 268); or again: 'I have often observ'd since, and leave it as a caution to the Readers of this Story, that we ought to be cautious of gratifying our Inclinations in loose and lewd Freedoms' (*MF*, p. 119). There is no apparent attempt to build a relationship with the reader. Moll

⁵ A 'narrateur extradiégétique', according to Genette, is a first-degree narrator, that is, a narrator who is not introduced by another narrator. A 'narrateur homodiégétique' is a first degree narrator who is also a character in his own story, either as a secondary character such as an observer, a witness, or as the hero of his own story. A 'narrateur autodiégétique' is a sub-category of the 'narrateur homodiégétique'; it is a first-degree narrator who is also the hero of his own story. These distinctions are detailed *Figure III*, pp. 252-53.

The diegesis (my translation of Genette's 'diégèse') is the world in which the story takes place: 'c'est un univers plutôt qu'un enchaînement d'actions (histoire)'; 'la diégèse n'est donc pas l'histoire, mais l'univers où elle advient' (*Nouveau Discours du Récit*, p. 13). As we establish in chapter four of the thesis, the narrative of *Moll Flanders* does not exactly fit Genette's categories of narrators.

refers to the reader indifferently in the third person singular or plural. This gives an impersonal tone to the addresses.

Moll presents herself as a 'very indifferent Monitor', who does not spend a lot of time and ink reflecting on her life, so that most of the narrative is factual (*MF*, p. 126). This is not to say that Moll is unaware of what happens to her. On the contrary, she is very lucid and makes sharp and concise characterisations of the people she meets, as well as unsparing short remarks about her own nature:

Thus my Pride, not my Principle, my Money, not my Vertue, kept me Honest; tho' as it prov'd, I found I had much better have been Sold by my *She Comrade* to her Brother, than have Sold my self as I did to a Tradesman, that was Rake, Gentleman, Shop keeper, and Beggar all together. (*MF*, p. 61)

Her remarks sometimes originate from her looking back on things as she is writing in her old age. For example, when she is flattered about her looks at the age of ten, she comments: 'however that Pride had no ill effect upon me yet' (*MF*, p. 14). Or again, when the older brother of her adoptive family proclaims his love for her, she remarks: 'had there not been one Misfortune in it, I had been in the Right, but the Mistake lay here, that Mrs. *Betty* was in Earnest, and the Gentleman was not' (*MF*, p. 22). At other times, her reflections are contemporaneous with the action and have a direct impact on her life. This is the case with her husband in Virginia when she finds out that he is her half-brother:

In the mean time, as I was but too sure of the Fact, I liv'd therefore in open avowed Incest and Whoredom, and all under the appearance of an honest Wife; and tho' I was not much touched with the Crime of it, yet the Action had something in it shocking to Nature, and made my Husband, *as he thought himself*, even nauseous to me. (*MF*, p. 89)

She then proceeds to avoid having sex with him, and she devises plans to be allowed to go back to England without him. However, it is sometimes difficult to tell whether Moll had an insight into her situation at the time, or whether her comments spring from her subsequent knowledge of the consequences of her actions on her life. At the time when she

is 'suppos'd' to be writing her own story, Moll emphasises that she and her husband have resolved 'to spend the Remainder of [their] Years in sincere Penitence, for the wicked Lives [they] have lived' (MF, pp. 343). Moreover, the editor explains his mission to 'wrap [...] up' her story 'clean', which leads to many heavy handed moralistic comments (MF, p. 1). These passages are usually 'caution[s] to the Readers of this Story' (MF, p. 119):

And here I cannot but reflect upon the unhappy Consequence of too great Freedoms between Persons stated as we were, upon the pretence of innocent intentions, Love of Friendship, *and the like*; for the Flesh has generally so great a share in those Friendships, that it is great odds but inclination prevails at last over the most solemn Resolutions; and that Vice breaks in at the breaches of Decency, which really innocent Friendship ought to preserve with the greatest strictness [...]. (MF, p. 126)

It is difficult not to read the following moral to the story of Moll and her lover in Bath without irony. She explains earlier: 'It is true [...] that from the first hour I began to converse with him, I resolv'd to let him lye with me, if he offer'd it' (MF, p. 119). Moreover, the event which leads the innocent friends to become lovers is the gentleman's 'deep Protestations of a sincere inviolable Affection' for Moll, which he wishes to prove to her by lying in bed naked with her but preserving her virtue (MF, p. 114). Moll's analyses of the feelings and state of mind of the people she is in contact with, as well as of her own, are geared, on the one hand towards setting an example to the reader, and, on the other hand, towards explaining the development of the actions and drawing conclusions on the outcome of the episodes. Rather than being drawn inwards towards introspection, Moll's text does not linger on the feelings described. It carries the reader forward as actions and their consequences follow on from each other. Moreover, if one believes that Defoe was aware of the irony of certain of the situations in which he places his heroine, and of the discrepancy between her actions and her moralistic reflections, then Moll's comments not only contribute to a sharp criticism of a society whose values rest on money, they also offer a more comical and more complex portrait of the heroine as a character and as a narrator.

Moll Flanders's journey through life is introduced by Defoe as a moral and spiritual lesson to the world. Unlike Bunyan's allegory, *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678), which uses the voyage motif but concentrates on the relationships between the self and God, eighteenth-century fictions such as *Moll Flanders* deal with the relationships between the self and society. For instance, in relation to her own plight, Moll makes numerous asides throughout the book on the condition of the women of her time:

I would fain have the Conduct of my Sex a little Regulated in this particular, which is the Thing, in which of all the parts of Life, I think at this Time we suffer most in: 'Tis nothing but lack of Courage, the fear of not being Marry'd at all, and of that frightful State of Life, call'd *an old Maid*; of which I have a Story to tell by itself: This I say, is the Woman's Snare; but would the Ladies once but get above that Fear, and manage rightly, they would more certainly avoid it by standing their Ground, in a Case so absolutely Necessary to their Felicity, than by exposing themselves as they do; and if they did not Marry so soon as they may do otherwise, they would make themselves amends by Marrying safer [...]. (*MF*, pp. 75–76)

The whole book contains details on how she manages carefully and artfully to calculate her way out of harsh situations to her advantage. Thus, for example, when leaving Virginia and her three children behind, Moll only reflects on her brother's engagement to support her for as long as she lived (*MF*, p. 104). She moves on from one life to another without pondering for long on the loved ones she leaves behind. For instance, Moll claims she has no heirs to her banker before she meets her Lancashire husband (*MF*, p. 134). If my calculations are right, by then she has had nine children, five of whom are probably still alive. Moreover, when she hears the news that her loving and caring companion from Bath is seriously ill, she reflects in a self-centered materialistic way:

This was heavy News for me, and I began now to see an end of my Prosperity, and to see also that it was very well I had play'd the good Housewife, and secur'd or saved something while he was alive, for that now I had no view of *my own living* before me. (*MF*, p. 121)

One feels that Moll's conversion at Newgate is a choice guided by the lack of practical earthly solutions to her problem, a self-interested way of securing herself a better place in

the other world. In effect, she 'sees the light' when she realises that she has no hope for a better life on earth as she has just been condemned to death. When in Newgate, Moll's inner feelings about her transformation are not expressed. This is how she describes her confession to the minister:

This honest friendly way of treating me, unlock'd all the Sluices of my Passions: He broke into my very Soul by it; and I unravell'd all the Wickedness of my Life to him. In a word, I gave him an Abridgement of this whole History; I gave him the Picture of my Conduct for 50 Years in Miniature. (*MF*, p. 288)

The minister's speech is simply said to 'revive [her] Heart' and the story moves on as he obtains a reprieve for her and she is transported to America (*MF*, p. 289). The imbalance or discrepancy between the long, detailed and entertaining tale of her mischief and her brief and sudden transformation is acknowledged by Moll straight after the story of her conversion. She explains that: 'this may be thought inconsistent in itself, and wide from the Business of this Book', and she fears that readers might enjoy the tale of her wickedness better (*MF*, p. 291). The words 'Abridgement' and 'Miniature' in the paragraph quoted above and the very small number of pages, four in Starr's edition (1971), devoted to her conversion emphasise this impression (*MF*, p. 288). In addition, the feeling of 'Providence' she marvels about towards the end of her story, and which, she says, gives all its meaning to her conversion, is triggered by the prospect of wealth. When hearing from her son in the Colonies about the financial details of her inheritance, she exclaims:

This was all strange News to me, and things I had not been us'd to; and really my Heart began to look up more seriously, than I think it ever did before, and to look with great Thankfulness to the Hand of Providence, which had done such wonders for me, who had been myself the greatest wonder of Wickedness, perhaps that had been suffered to live in the World; and I must again observe, that not on this Occasion only, but even on all other Occasions of Thankfulness, my past wicked and abominable Life never look'd so Monstrous to me, and I never so completely abhorr'd it, and reproach'd myself with it, as when I had a Sense upon me of Providence doing good to me, while I had been making those vile Returns on my part. (*MF*, pp. 336-37)

Moll's sense of 'life by value', as opposed to a quantitative life, which David Higdon finds she has acquired with her conversion, seems to correspond to her sense of the value of money.⁶ Moll's spiritual development throughout the story is scarcely emphasised by Defoe's narrative. Rather, she is presented as someone endowed with an amazing instinct for survival, an enduring and crafty profit-maker whose nature and skills are tailored to the needs of the society of the eighteenth century.

A. A. Mendilow explains that 'there is as a rule one point of time in the story which serves as the point of reference' so that, if the reader is engrossed in his reading, he 'translates all that happens from this moment of time onwards into an imaginative present of his own'.⁷ From then on, everything which is posterior to this landmark will be seen as a development in the story, and everything which is presented as anterior to this landmark will appear as belonging to the past. In *Moll Flanders*, once the reader has made the effort of shifting from his own living time to that of the text he is reading, the whole story can carry him from Moll's tale of her youth to that of her old age in America, without any major breach of illusion. He can believe that what he witnesses is actually happening – or, in the case of *Moll Flanders*, that it happened once, was put to paper by the very person who lived through the adventures, and is revived by the words he reads on the page. Mendilow also comments on the fact that a novel in the first person rarely conveys a feeling of presence and immediacy because of its retrospective nature which acknowledges the gap between the time the author wrote his novel and the time when the story happened. He writes:

⁶ David Higdon, *Time and English Fiction* (London: Macmillan, 1977), p. 57.

⁷ A. A. Mendilow, *Time and the Novel* (New York: Humanities Press, 1952), p. 96.

There is a vital difference between writing a story forward from the past, as in the third person novel, and writing one backward from the present, as in the first person novel. Though both are equally written in the past, in the former the illusion is created that the action is taking place; in the latter, the action is felt as having taken place. (*Time and the Novel*, p. 107)

Once the reader overcomes this gap, Defoe's text allows the reader's imaginative shift from his own actual present to the fictional past in which the novel is written, 'itself translated in reverse to a fictive present', to work in a very simple way (*Time and the Novel*, p. 64). Moll tells the story of her life in chronological order. Whereas the texts of *Tom Jones* and *Tristram Shandy* are segmented into chapters and volumes, and the text of *Clarissa* is composed of distinct letters, Moll's tale is of one piece, with only paragraph marks to separate the various episodes. Moreover, the sequence of events is rarely interrupted or redirected by digressions. When a digression occurs, it is short and closely in line with the story of her life, merely offering additional explanations, details and advice. Consequently, the reader does not lose track of the plot. Finally, it is easy to configure a text which offers one narrative voice and perspective, one main time-line without any complex overlaps of temporalities, and one main narrative pace, mainly the summary.⁸

In *Tom Jones*, the main story is narrated in the past tense. It is told by a first degree narrator (or 'narrateur extradiégétique' in Genette's terminology). Contrary to Moll, he does not belong to the story he is telling, so he is what Genette calls a 'narrateur hétérodiégétique'.⁹ Most of the story could then be defined, in Mendilow's terms quoted above, as being written 'forward from the past', 'as in the third person novel'. Thus, one is acquainted with the hero, Tom, from the time when, as a baby, he is found wrapped up in

⁸ I use the verb 'to configure', following Paul Ricoeur's use of the word 'configuration' seen in note 1 above.

⁹ Gérard Genette, *Figures III* (Paris: Seuil, 1972); p. 255.

Mr. Allworthy's bed sheets.¹⁰ We accompany him through several stages of his youth until he is wed to his beloved, Sophia, in the very last chapter of the book. Moreover, the fictional adventures of the characters told in the past mix with historical events, which gives them an air of authenticity. There is chronological consistency in *Tom Jones*, as Ian Watt explains:

not only in relation to each other [events], and to the time that each stage of the journey of the various characters from the West Country to London would actually have taken, but also in relation to such external considerations as the proper phases of the moon and the time-table of the Jacobite rebellion in 1745, the supposed year of the action.¹¹

Tom Jones was published in 1749, when the rebellion was finished, which gives credibility to its historical background. In a similar way to what happens when reading *Moll Flanders*, the reader forgets his own living present, gets engrossed in the story of the characters which is in the past, a past which he transforms into a reading present. *Moll Flanders* is composed of snippets of the life of the heroine interspersed with large gaps in time, allowing Defoe to cover the story of most of Moll's life. In *Tom Jones*, it is easier to get absorbed in the episodes. In the first three books, a relatively small number of pages is devoted to a considerable span of time which brings the protagonists from early childhood to the age of nineteen, when love leads them into various adventures. Consequently, large ellipses and numerous summaries are predominant. They are interspersed with a few scenes where the speed of the story and the length of the narrative are closer to isochronism. These scenes focus on significant events which are relevant to future critical times, as if the reader were progressively given a set of cards that he will have to have in his hands for the denouement.

¹⁰ Henry Fielding, *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling*, ed. by Fredson Bowers and Martin Battestin (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1974), I 3, p. 39. All further quotations from this edition of *Tom Jones* will be referred to in the main text as *TJ*.

¹¹ Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel, Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1957), p. 25.

However, from then on, the narrator concentrates on a shorter period of time to which he devotes long sections of text. As the story progresses, the balance between scenes, summaries and ellipses changes. The suspense becomes more powerful and the tension increases, as the protagonists are more entangled in complex and dangerous situations. The narrator focuses more on showing than telling, and summaries in the past tense give way to a greater proportion of reported dialogues (scenes) in the present tense. Ellipses are less numerous as chapters are devoted to smaller units of time. One does not scan across many years of the lives of the characters anymore, but rather across weeks and even days and hours as one advances. Thus, in the table of contents one reads: Book IV 'Containing the Time of a Year', Book VI 'Containing about three Weeks', Book VII 'Containing three Days', Book IX 'Containing twelve Hours'. Chronological time slows down considerably, and yet the pace of events accelerates over a much shorter period of fictional time. As the scenes are very detailed and there is little summary, the pace of events is closer to the pace of reading.

Yet, in *Tom Jones*, within the main story, the omniscient narrator regularly interrupts the flow of the narrative with his direct addresses to the reader in the present tense. Moll's addresses to the reader do not greatly disturb the referential illusion, mainly because she is the teller of her own adventures, and her occasional addresses are simple reminders of the religious aim of her writings. In *Tom Jones*, however, the heterodiegetical narrator's intrusions drag the reader away from his illusion of participating in the time and place of the action, what Mendilow calls his 'Relative Now'. Instead, they bring the reader's awareness to the world of story telling, and to his own reading process or 'Absolute Now' (*Time and the Novel*, p. 99). One reads: 'On this Subject, Reader, I must stop a Moment, to tell thee a Story' (*TJ*, XI 8, p. 604). This is especially noticeable to today's reader whose

experience of many nineteenth and twentieth-century novels has led him to view the capacity to maintain a thorough suspension of disbelief as the key to successful novel writing. The breach of illusion is often conducive to comedy, as when the narrator interrupts a romantic moment for the sake of narrative equilibrium:

The Lovers now stood both silent and trembling, *Sophia* being unable to with-draw her Hand from *Jones*, and he almost as unable to hold it; when the Scene, which I believe some of my Readers will think had lasted long enough, was interrupted by one of so different a Nature that we shall reserve the Relation of it for a different Chapter. (*TJ*, VI 8, p. 299)

When wanting to dismiss a character, for instance, *Tom Jones*'s narrator places his own information on a higher plane than what happens to the characters. One reads about Jenny: "To this Place therefore, wherever it was, we will wish her a good Journey, and for the present take leave of her [...] having Matters of much higher Importance to communicate to the Reader" (*TJ*, I 9, p. 60). Furthermore, the narrator does not hesitate to take the front of the stage openly, thereby making it clear to the reader that he is the indispensable speaker in the text, the storyteller who holds all the threads:

I ask Pardon for this short Appearance, by Way of Chorus, on the Stage. It is in Reality for my own Sake, that, while I am discovering the Rocks on which Innocence and Goodness often split, I may not be misunderstood to recommend the very Means to my worthy Readers, by which I intend to shew them will be undone. And this, as I could not prevail on any of my Actors to speak, I myself was obliged to declare. (*TJ*, III 7, pp. 141-42)

The heterodiegetical narrator plays a prominent part in *Tom Jones* as the introductory chapters to each Book are almost entirely devoted to the time and space of story telling rather than those of the story told.¹² The introductory chapters create reflective halts between different episodes, as they are a privileged place for comments and theories on the

¹² 'Heterodiegetical narrator' is my own translation of Genette's 'narrateur hétérodiégétique' quoted above. The thesis offers a detailed analysis of narratorial intrusions in *Tom Jones* in chapter four.

new genre and criticism of the writing habits of the time. Frederick Karl defines the chapters as being 'valiant efforts at definition'. He further explains that:

whereas, in the other parts of the novel, identity involved character and role, here identity involves the much broader issue of the form itself, the development of the novel genre, and the place that the novel will have among previous genres. Fielding's remarks are attempts to fix prose fiction within certain limitations of time and probability and to distinguish the novel from romance on the one hand, history on the other. In these remarks, Fielding must fit the new into the period's sense of the old, and he must justify experimentation in traditional ways.¹³

Fielding and Sterne were particularly aware of the fact that their 'Vehicle' was new and that, in order for their readers to accept and understand their work, there was a need to instruct or to adjust the audience in accordance with the book.¹⁴ Fielding's narrator in the introductory chapter of the second Book claims: 'I am, in reality, the Founder of a new Province of Writing, so I am at liberty to make what Laws I please therein' (*TJ*, II 1, p. 77). In *Tristram Shandy*, the narrator, Tristram, boasts to his readers from the very beginning that his book is of a different kind which cannot be classified according to traditional rules. He claims: 'for in writing what I have set about, I shall confine myself neither to [Horace's] rules, nor to any man's rules that ever lived'.¹⁵ Fielding and Sterne pay attention to their

¹³ Frederick Karl, *A Reader's Guide to the Development of the English Novel in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1975), p. 175.

¹⁴ Laurence Sterne, *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy*, ed. by Gardner D. Stout, Jr. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), p. 82. All further quotations from this edition of *A Sentimental Journey* will be referred to in the main text as *ASJ*.

Yorick, Sterne's narrator in *A Sentimental Journey*, uses the dynamic word 'Vehicle' instead of the word 'book' when he proudly explains in his preface that both his 'travels and observations will be altogether of a different cast from any of [his] forerunners'. But, until he has proven himself further, he cannot claim the right to have 'a whole nitch' entirely to himself in the categories of travellers – and of writers – by the 'mere Novelty of [his] Vehicle' (*ibid.*).

¹⁵ Laurence Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, in *The Florida Edition of the Works of Laurence Sterne*, ed. by Melvyn New and Joan New (Gainesville: The University Presses of Florida, volumes one and two, 1978, and volume three, 1984), I 4, p. 5. All further quotations from this edition of *Tristram Shandy* will be referred to in the main text as *TS*.

narrative and its construction, and make the reader aware of the book as an object and of its reading as a temporal process across the space of the text.

In his wish to reinforce the realistic aspect of his 'History', Fielding's narrator presents himself as a spectator to the progression of the characters through time and space. He tells the reader: 'Our Pen, therefore, shall imitate the Expedition which it describes, and our History shall keep Pace with the Travellers who are its Subject' (*TJ*, XI 9, p. 612). The reader is also included in the journey of the characters and that of its writing. The metaphor of the 'Stage-Coach', used in the introductory chapter of the last book, illustrates this phenomenon:

A Farewel to the reader.

We are now, Reader, arrived at the last Stage of our long Journey. As we have therefore travelled together through so many Pages, let us behave to one another like Fellow-Travellers in a Stage-Coach, who have passed several Days in the Company of each other; and who, notwithstanding any Bickerings or little animosities which may have occurred on the Road, generally make all up at last, and mount, for the last Time, into their Vehicle with Chearfulness and Good-Humour; since, after this one Stage, it may possibly happen to us, as it commonly happens to them, never to meet more. (*TJ*, XVIII 1, p. 913)

The narrator seems to suggest in this quotation that he is a spectator to the story, just like the reader. This contrasts with his openly selective, manipulative and omniscient handling of the narrative. The direct addresses to the reader in the present tense momentarily free the reader from referential illusion. They bring upon him a new illusion: that the narrating voice can reach him and the narrator can offer himself as a close and constant travelling companion. The form of the narrative participates in the shaping of this illusion. There are stages in the journey of the 'Fellow-Travellers' which are materialised by textual divisions. Chapters and Books are used as 'breathing time', during which the characters, the narrator and the reader can rest at the same time and in the same place in the book:

He then resumed his Narration; but as he hath taken Breath for a while, we think proper to give it to our Reader, and shall therefore put an End to this Chapter. (*TJ*, VIII 11, p. 460)

[The man of the hill] proceeded to relate what we shall proceed to write, after we have given a short breathing Time to both ourselves and the Reader. (*TJ*, VIII 13, p. 474)

The few metalepses, or passages which transgress from one narrative level to another, can be seen as an attempt to bridge the gap between the separate worlds and temporalities of the narrator/pseudo-author and the reader, so that writing and reading occasionally appear to be simultaneous activities.¹⁶ Fielding conveys the impression that extradiegetical narrator, diegetical characters, and external readers are brought together for the time of the 'Journey' in the space of the book as the narrator invites the reader to come with him and witness the adventures by his side:

Reader, take care. I have unadvisedly led thee to the Top of as high a Hill as Mr. *Allworthy's*, and how to get thee down without breaking thy Neck, I do not well know. However, let us e'en venture to slide down together; for Miss *Bridget* rings her Bell, and Mr. *Allworthy* is summoned to Breakfast, where I must attend, and, if you please, shall be glad of your Company. (*TJ*, I 4, pp. 43-44)

In *Tom Jones*, the narrative alternates between long sections of story told in the past, which captures the reader's imagination, and the intrusion of a self-conscious narratorial voice in the present, which points to the materiality of the work one is reading and tries to establish a bond between the pseudo-creator and the reader. In such a book, the pleasure one takes in reading comes partly from the reader's willing suspension of disbelief, and partly from being made aware, like a privileged spectator, of the artifices of the processes of writing and reading.

¹⁶ Metalepsis (plural: metalepses), is my translation for Genette's 'métalepse narrative', which he defines as follows: 'Toute intrusion du narrateur ou du narrataire extradiegetique dans l'univers diegetique (ou de personnages diegetiques dans un univers metadiegetique, etc.) ou inversement [...], produit un effet de bizarrerie soit bouffonne [...] soit fantastique. Nous étendrons à toutes ces transgressions le terme de métalepse narrative' (*Figure III*, p. 243).

Whether a fictional narrative should be considered as a unity one can only apprehend in its totality; or whether it should be experienced in its development through time, allowing fluctuations in one's opinion-forming process, as Fielding suggests with his image of reading as a 'Journey' through the book, has been the subject of debates between twentieth-century critics. Many critics oppose Joseph Frank's view that:

an image is defined [...] as a unification of disparate ideas and emotions into a complex presented spatially in an instant of time. Such a complex is not to proceed discursively, according to the laws of language, but is rather to strike the reader's sensibility with an instantaneous impact. [...] modern poetry asks its readers to suspend the process of individual reference temporarily until the entire pattern of internal references can be apprehended as a unity.¹⁷

On the contrary, Walter Sutton believes that 'in the process of reading as in the process of composition [...] time is of the essence' so that the work cannot be apprehended in its totality or instantaneously:

I would agree with Mr. Frank that each element within a poem contributes to the unity of the 'entire pattern'. But I would deny that the apprehension of this unity could ever be [...] instantaneous. It is one which develops with the reading of the poem and which is subject to flux and revision at any time during the reading, or in retrospect.¹⁸

Wolfgang Iser develops crucial theories of the act of reading which explain his ideas on the mechanism of the process of reading. He gives examples of the difference and the fruitfulness of a criticism that concentrates on the consequences or impact of the literary work on the reader, rather than on the life of the author or the application of fixed currents of criticism as a grid on the text. He explains that 'large-scale texts such as novels or epics cannot be continually "present" to the reader with an identical degree of intensity'. He refers to Fielding and the metaphor of the Stage-Coach 'whereby the reader is likened to a

¹⁷ Joseph Frank, *The Widening Gyre: Crisis and Mastery in Modern Literature* (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1963), pp. 9-10.

¹⁸ Walter Sutton, 'The Literary Image and the Reader: A Consideration of the Theory of Spatial Form', *Journal of Aesthetics*, 6 (1957), 112-23 (pp. 123, 116-17).

traveller in a stagecoach, who has to make the often difficult journey through the novel, gazing out in his memory, and establishes a pattern of consistency', so that 'at no time [...] can he have a total view of that journey'.¹⁹ The reader thus constructs the meaning of the text through a 'continual interplay between modified expectations and transformed memories' thanks to 'the moving viewpoint which travels along' inside the text it has to apprehend' (*The Act of Reading*, pp. 111, 109). Iser, Sutton and also Rimmon-Kenan, see the act of reading and apprehending a text as a protean and never-ending process in time which does not allow the reader to grasp the totality of a work. As Rimmon-Kenan explains, 'reading can be seen as a continuous process of forming hypotheses, reinforcing them, developing them, modifying them, and sometimes replacing them by others or dropping them altogether. It should be noted however, that even rejected hypotheses may continue to exercise some influence on the reader's comprehension'.²⁰ A narrative such as *Tom Jones*, which, on the one hand, contains a main narrative in the past tense which tends to an end, and, on the other hand, includes a self-conscious narrator addressing the reader in the present tense, contains elements of a finished product, but it calls the reader's attention to the processes of writing and of reading involved in reaching the end Fielding is aiming for.

Tristram Shandy is the opposite of a tale in many ways. In a tale, the narrator's role is reduced to that of an impersonal distant figure who tells a story which, from its very beginning, tends towards a specific ending, sometimes with a moral; the whole text is constructed in order to reach the peak of the denouement. *Tristram's* narration, on the

¹⁹ Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), p 16.

²⁰ Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* (London: Routledge, 1983), p. 121.

contrary, stresses the three elements of enunciation: the 'I', 'here' and 'now'. There are almost no summaries. Most of the text is composed of the narrator's comments in the present tense, and of scenes in which the conversations of the characters are both lively and direct, also in the present tense. Tristram is what Genette calls a 'narrateur-homodiégétique-extradiégétique-auteur-fictif explicite' (*Nouveau Discours du Récit*, p. 99). He is the fictitious author of his *Life and Opinions*. He appears as a character in the story he is telling ('homodiegetical'); but as a narrator, he is not part of the diegesis, that is to say that it is not the character who is dramatised in the story who speaks ('extradiegetical') (*Figure III*, pp. 252-53). The narrator is omnipresent, everything goes through him, and his comments often prevent the reader from concentrating on the stories told. From the very first sentence of the first chapter, the personal tone is given. Instead of stating facts in a distant way, or reporting someone else's story, Tristram introduces his opinion on the matter of his conception: 'I wish' (*TS*, p. 1).

Tristram, 'a mortal of so little consequence in the world' who has been repeatedly struck by misfortunes and has nothing extraordinary to tell about his life, compensates by attracting the reader's attention to his reflections and his style as a writer who, more than any others, has to juggle with extremely multifarious elements: 'I have forty volumes to write, and forty thousand things to say and do, which no body in the world will say and do for me' (*TS*, I 8, p. 13, VII 1, p. 576). He explains by elimination that he is the only essential element of his text. As he is about to 'enter upon a new scene of events' with his reader, he decides to leave 'the breeches in the tailor's hands, with my father standing over him with his cane', 'my mother', 'Slop', 'poor *Le Fever* to recover'. But, when it comes to leaving himself, the narrator and pseudo-author of the book, he states that it is 'the hardest of all': 'Let us leave, if possible, *myself*: — But 'tis impossible, — I must go along with

you to the end of the work' (*TS*, VI 20, p. 534). A narrative such as his, in which stories are constantly delayed or retained, where confusion is spread so that a lot of elements need clarifying at all times, which contains gaps and does not seem to lead to a conclusion, helps the narrator to stay alive because he remains the indispensable possessor of a knowledge he alone can supply.²¹

Any event or theory is related to Tristram's present of the narration and transformed by it. That is, everything is personalised by Tristram, who comically, ironically, or pedantically distorts, fragments, adds, moderates, exaggerates, and interweaves elements of knowledge with trifling family matters and his own concerns as an author. Thanks to this technique, any piece of knowledge or any past fact or event that Tristram introduces in his narrative is given a unique tone of novelty. It is seen from a different angle, snatched from its frame and given a new life, a life closely linked to its teller. For instance, when Tristram is about to be delivered into the world, Dr. Slop, the physician called by Walter Shandy, intends to show off his 'new invented *forceps*' (*TS*, III 16, p. 220). Unfortunately, the product of progress tears off the skin on the back of Toby's hand in the demonstration, and crushes his knuckles 'to a jelly' (*ibid.*). The worry then arises upon the consequences this invention would have on the child, and a doubt arises on the baby's presentation:

— And pray, good woman, after all, will you take upon you to say, it may not be the child's hip, as well as the child's head? — 'Tis most certainly the head, replied the midwife. Because, continued Dr. *Slop*, (turning to my father) as positive as these old ladies generally are, — 'tis a point very difficult to know, — and yet of the greatest consequence to be known; — because, Sir, if the hip is mistaken for the head, — there is a possibility (if it is a boy) that the forceps * * * * * . (*TS*, III 17, p. 221)

²¹ The role of interruptions and deferral in *Tristram Shandy* is fully developed in chapter three of the thesis.

This quotation exemplifies the mistrust of the modern male practitioner towards the traditional female midwife. Ironically, by venting his mistrust, Dr. Slop exposes how life threatening – or maybe just male threatening – his invention is, thereby destroying his own credibility and that of scientific progress. The potentially disastrous consequences of the forceps are all the more powerful in the reader's imagination that they are not spelt out but simply inferred by asterisks. Comedy is reinforced by Walter's despair triggered by the prospect of his child being mutilated. If the forceps catch the hip, he states mysteriously, 'you may as well take off the head too' (ibid.). Tristram confirms that bawdy has taken over what could have been a scientific demonstration by concluding: 'It is morally impossible the reader should understand this, ——— 'tis enough Dr. *Slop* understood it' (ibid.). He further ridicules the man of science by describing how 'nimble', 'for a man of his size' he makes his way across the room (ibid.). Thus, even to this day, one can read about obstetrical issues and be amused and intrigued, since in *Tristram Shandy* nothing is told in a dry and detached scientific way. Instead, everything is humanised and has its failings, and this produces comedy. This idiosyncratic style became extremely popular in London as soon as the first instalment of *Tristram Shandy* was published. A comment in *The Clockmakers Outcry* (1760), a pamphlet triggered by the publication of the first volumes of Sterne's book, illustrates the trend: 'Our manners and speech at present are all *be-Tristram'd*. Nobody speaks now but in the *Shandean* style; the modish phraseology is all taken from him, and his equally intelligible imitators, especially in love affairs'.²²

²² *The Clockmakers Outcry Against the Author of The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*. Dedicated to the Most Humble of Prelates. *Tu es Sacerdos secundum ordinem Melchisedech?* Art thou a Priest according to the Order of Melchisedech? (London: Printed for J. Burd, near the Temple Gate, Fleet-street, 1760), p. 40. Oates 434 (1st ed), in Anne Bandry, 'The First Reactions to *Tristram Shandy* in the Oates Collection', *The Shandean: An Annual Devoted to Laurence Sterne and His Works*, 1 (1989), 27-52 (p.28). Some examples are given in the *Clockmakers Outcry*, such as 'My dear, if you are desirous of being *inflated*†, pray grant me the favour of *homunculating*† you' (p. 41).

Moreover, in a story told in the present tense, the effect of homodiegetisation is stronger because the present tense implies, as Genette explains, '[la] présence d'un narrateur qui (pense inévitablement le lecteur) ne peut être bien loin d'une action qu'il donne lui-même comme si proche' (*Nouveau Discours du Récit*, p. 55). Whilst the narrator in *Tom Jones* could be reduced to a disembodied voice off-stage, one can easily picture Tristram as he writes: 'here am I sitting, this 12th day of August, 1766, in a purple jerkin and yellow pair of slippers, without either wig or cap on' (*TS*, IX 1, p. 737). The narrator presents himself as an individual, with idiosyncratic manners and clothing style. He stresses details, such as his absence of headwear. He is a moving human being torn between comedy and pathos, whose eccentricities are bound to attract and retain the reader's attention to him, for his own sake as well as for his writings. For instance, the reader is told about his sudden changes of mood:

— It is not half an hour ago, when [...] I threw a fair sheet, which I had just finished, and carefully wrote out, slap into the fire, instead of the foul one. / Instantly I snatch'd off my wig, and threw it perpendicularly, with all imaginable violence, up to the top of the room [...]. (*TS*, IV 17, p. 349-50)

In contradistinction to A. A. Mendilow's definition of 'the final test of successful fiction', Sterne explicitly focuses on the creator and his creation:

The novelist cannot even, as can a dramatist, describe a thing as happening, only as having happened. And yet he must, to be successful, evoke a feeling of presence and presentness in the minds of his readers. Somehow he has to persuade them into that 'willing suspension of disbelief' that will render fiction ('the art of lying agreeably', as l'Abbé Huet pleasantly called it) not *fictum* – wrought by appreciable artistry, but *fictum* – deceptive, illusory, something that blinds the reader to its existence as a medium intervening between him and his immediate perception of reality. It must give him the direct sensation of being and seeing and doing himself in the here and now of the fictional world he is for the moment living in; or, what amounts to the same thing, it must make him forget both himself and the author in the novel. This was always accepted as constituting the final test of successful fiction. (*Time and the Novel*, p. 33)

Yet, the attention to the 'medium intervening' between the reader and the text of fiction he is reading is exactly what some Sterne specialists find extremely attractive: 'Une magie

étrange et troublante suscite l'homme, si distinctement assis devant nous depuis deux siècles'.²³ Henri Fluchère sees it as an unique artistic achievement:

C'est la peine qu'il prend pour nous imposer cette présence qui constitue (par rapport à ce qui l'a précédé et à ce qui l'a suivi) la profonde originalité du livre, et qui lui donnera [...] une valeur artistique unique, et, à ce titre, exemplaire.²⁴

Tristram draws attention to himself in the act of writing on many occasions. The reader is given some precise dates at which the narrator is writing his book: March 9 1759 (*TS*, I 18, p. 51), March 26 1759 (*TS*, I 21, p. 71), August 10 1761 (*TS*, V 17, p. 449), August 12, 1766 (*TS*, IX 1, p. 737). It is important to grasp that, of all the dates and chronological landmarks in the book, these dates should be the only ones with an orderly progression in time. This is a significant invitation to concentrate on the creator and the process of creating, rather than on the creation as a finished and self-contained product. In *Tristram Shandy*, the focus on the narration is uniquely reinforced by the inclusion of the duration of the act of writing into the narrative. The process of writing the words which shape the story given to the reader is usually accepted per se in fiction and is given no time of its own, as if it were 'un acte instantané, sans dimension temporelle' (*Figures III*, p. 234). In addition, Genette reminds us that the process of narrating is sometimes dated but never measured (*ibid.*). When noting that it took five years for Flaubert to write *Madame Bovary* (1857), which goes unnoticed when reading the novel, Genette emphasises that *Tristram Shandy* belongs to a category of its own:

Pourtant, et fort curieusement en somme, la narration fictive de ce récit, comme dans presque tous les romans du monde, excepté *Tristram Shandy*, est censée n'avoir aucune durée, ou plus exactement tout se passe comme si la question de sa durée n'avait aucune pertinence [...]. (*ibid.*)

²³ Jean-Jacques Mayoux, 'Temps vécu et temps créé dans *Tristram Shandy*', *Poétique*, 2 (1970), 174-86 (p. 182).

²⁴ Henry Fluchère, *Laurence Sterne : de l'homme à l'oeuvre : biographie critique et essai d'interprétation de Tristram Shandy* (Paris: Gallimard, 1961), p. 230.

In effect, the reader of *Tristram Shandy* is not just given the dates at which the narrator writes, and the present tense of the narration is not just a means for the narrator to express an opinion or introduce a topic. One needs to take into account the temporalities of the act of writing and of the pseudo-author which are mixed amongst those of the fictional world as in the example quoted above: 'It is not *half an hour ago*, when [...] I threw a fair sheet [...] slap into the fire' (*TS*, IV 17, p. 349-50, my italics). The half-hour, which in other works of fiction would automatically refer to the world of the diegesis and its characters, refers here to the extradiegetical world and its narrator. Since Tristram gives his reader the possibility to locate him in time and in space and gives him a sense of his actions and of their duration, the reader of *Tristram Shandy* not only partakes in the life of the fictional world, but he is given the unique opportunity to share some of the life of the pseudo-creator engrossed in his art. *Tristram Shandy* breaks an overpowering universal illusion of fiction, that of the extradiegetical pseudo-author's writing being timeless. The reader of *Tom Jones* experiences a reassuring feeling, emanating from the text, of a narrator who is in total control of his narrative, who divides and paces his narration in an orderly and balanced way, so that the actual physical act of writing and its temporality are not an issue at all. In *Tristram Shandy*, the reader experiences uneasiness mixed with admiration at a narrator who is faced with an impossible task: that of catching life with his writings. More than an issue, writing is a struggle for Tristram:

I have left my father lying across his bed, and my uncle *Toby* in his old fringed chair, sitting beside him, and promised I would go back to them in half an hour, and five and thirty minutes are laps'd already. — Of all the perplexities a mortal author was ever seen in, — this certainly is the greatest, for I have *Hafen Slawkenbergius's* folio, Sir, to finish — a dialogue between my father and my uncle *Toby*, upon the solution of *Prignitz, Scroderus*, [...] to relate, — a tale out of *Slawkenbergius* to translate, and all this in five minutes less, than no time at all [...]. (*TS*, III 38, p. 278)

Tristram sets time limits which he cannot keep because of the multitude of narrative threads he keeps going at the same time. He stresses the fact that he is in a chronological dead-end. Worse than having no time left, he makes the reader believe that he is running five minutes into negative time. Having run out of time, the thirty minutes which he imposed on himself, he then appears powerful enough to create a negative time into which he can still tell stories. Thus, Tristram does not just refer to his act of writing and the time it takes, they belong to the intricate web of themes developed in the book. This is a source of comedy and, above all, of experimentation.

At the beginning of the book, Tristram pretends to give a historical background for his knowledge of the stories he tells, such as that of his conception: 'To my uncle Mr. *Toby Shandy* do I stand indebted for the preceding anecdote'; 'as my uncle *Toby* well remember'd'; 'as he call'd it' (*TS*, I 3, p. 4). He also feigns having difficulties finding his parents' marriage settlement (*TS*, I 15, p. 42). *Moll Flanders* offers similar justification for the tale of events anterior to what her own memory could retain: 'This is too near the first Hours of my Life, for me to relate any thing of myself, but by hear say' (*MF*, p. 8). Her tale is of a very different nature to that of Tristram. It is mainly composed of summaries and broad outlines of events. It is easier to believe that a narrator can obtain the knowledge of facts and actions outside her personal experience from an external source, than it is to believe that Tristram's descriptions of what 'passes in a man's own mind' can originate from anywhere else but his mind (*TS*, II 2, p. 98). In *Tristram Shandy*, the narrator is not only capable of re-enacting whole conversations which took place in a very distant past (before his birth) in their every detail, but he can also read, present to the reader, and analyse the content and the workings of his characters' minds. His attempts to create referential illusion give way to an undisguised demonstration of the imaginative power of

his fictional creation. The description of Phutatorius's reaction to pain is a comic example of the potential of the mind of the narrator:

— But the heat gradually increasing, and in a few seconds more getting beyond the point of all sober pleasure, and then advancing with all speed into the regions of pain, — the soul of *Phutatorius*, together with all his ideas, his thoughts, his attention, his imagination, judgement, resolution, deliberation, ratiocination, memory, fancy, with ten battalions of animal spirits, all tumultuously crowded down, though different defiles and circuits, to the place in danger, leaving all his upper regions, as you may imagine, as empty as my purse.

With the best intelligence which all these messengers could bring him back, *Phutatorius* was not able to dive into the secret of what was going on forwards below, nor could he make any kind of conjecture, what the devil was the matter with it [...]. (*TS*, IV 27, pp. 381-82)

Tristram Shandy deals with events which belong to a distant past, but they are made present by a very lively technique using reported speech and the inclusion of conversations in direct speech, as if they were all taking place at the time when the narrator is writing. Sterne also understood, like Richardson, that chronology was a limited way of conveying reality and the depth of human experience, that only the consciousness of the past incorporated into the present could give life to the events of his story. So, fictional events are not arranged mainly sequentially, chronologically, or according to a set pattern of cause and consequence, but principally as they relate directly to the mind of the narrator-pseudo-author as he is writing the book:

C'est ce qui se passe dans l'esprit de *Tristram* qui constitue la substance permanente du livre, et c'est comment cela se passe qui lui donne son unité structurelle - à savoir l'esprit de *Tristram* aux prises avec les données de sa réalité, c'est à dire sa personne, son historicité, son tempérament, son espace, sa durée, son entourage, ses lectures, ses idées, ses souvenirs, et ainsi de suite, mais aussi la façon dont il va traduire en mots, coucher en langage significatif pour autrui cette expérience de sa vie qu'il prétend nous faire partager bien plus qu'il prétend nous la raconter. (Fluchère, p. 292)

As the process of creation is given the front of the stage, and the mind of an eccentric narrator is chosen as the artistic director, the shape of the narrative cannot be similar to those which mainly attempt to reconstruct a reflection of reality. In *Tristram's* narrative,

constant time shifts and movements from one topic to the other cannot be considered as anachronies and digressions, because there is not one main story line anchored in the text from the beginning and an ordered sequence of events from which to diverge in the first place.²⁵ Instead, A. A. Mendilow aptly describes *Tristram Shandy* as a 'large number of interwoven and interrelated episodes'.²⁶ This explains why Tristram can state: 'Digressions, incontestably, are the sun-shine; — they are the soul of reading; --- take them out of this book for instance, -- you might as well take the book along with them' (*TS*, I 22, p. 81).

A powerful example of Tristram reviving past events is found when he begs his uncle not to be carried away by his thirst for knowledge in ballistics because the complexity of it would damage his health:

—— Stop! my dear uncle *Toby*, — stop! — go not one foot further into this thorny and bewilder'd track, — intricate are the steps! [...] intricate are the troubles which the pursuit of this bewitching phantom, KNOWLEDGE, will bring upon thee. — O my uncle! fly--fly--fly from it as from a serpent. — Is it fit, good-natur'd man! thou should'st sit up, with the wound upon thy groin, whole nights baking thy blood with hectic watchings? — Alas! 'twill exasperate thy symptoms, — check thy perspirations, — evaporate thy spirits, — waste thy animal strength, — dry up thy radical moisture, — bring thee into a costive habit of body, impair thy health, — and hasten all the infirmities of thy old age. — O my uncle! my uncle *Toby*. (*TS*, II 3, pp. 103-4)

His supplication is so gripping that it seems to annihilate the lapse of time between the time when the event is supposed to have happened — which is before Tristram's birth — and the time when the narrator is writing. Story telling is powerful enough to bring his uncle back

²⁵ Anachronies, my translation of Genette's 'anachronies narratives', are defined as various forms of discord between the order of the story and that of the narrative ('les différentes formes de discordance entre l'ordre de l'histoire et celui du récit', *Figures III*, p. 79). An anachrony constitutes a narrative that is subordinate in time to the one in which it takes place, although some cases may be more complex: 'Toute anachronie constitue par rapport au récit dans lequel elle s'insère [...] un récit temporellement second, subordonné au premier'; 'bien entendu [...] les emboîtements peuvent être plus complexes, et une anachronie peut faire figure de récit premier par rapport à une autre qu'elle supporte, et plus généralement, par rapport à une anachronie, l'ensemble du contexte peut être considéré comme récit premier' (*Figures III*, p. 90).

²⁶ A. A. Mendilow, 'The Revolt of Sterne', in *Laurence Sterne: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. by John Traugott (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1968), pp. 108-126 (p. 96).

fictionally, but it does not have the power to bring him back to real life, or to change the course of events which belong to the past. Yet, at the time when Tristram invokes him, Toby seems to be freed from time and to belong to 'l'existence conceptuelle incorruptible d'un fragment d'éternité' (Fluchère, p. 323).

Certain characters, Toby and Walter in particular, and also objects belonging to the scenery of the past, are brought to life by this absolute present (the present of writing), and endowed with a magic aura: that of the permanence of people and things through time. In Shandy Hall, a few places only, with particular items of furniture and fittings, repeatedly take the front of the stage and are described with great precision with regard to the part they play in the protagonists' actions and moods. The association in the reader's memory between a trait of personality of a character, his mannerism and his surroundings, takes the elements of characterisation beyond the linearity of the sequence of words on the page into the complex spatial world of mental representation. This is the case with Walter's expression of grief for instance, which the reader associates with his pose on the bed, his hand on the chamber pot and uncle Toby sitting on the "old set-stitch'd *chair*, valanced and fringed around with party-colour'd worsted bobs" (III, 29, p. 255). Shandy Hall and its oddities will be vividly pictured in the reader's mind whatever century they belong to, very distinctive and ahistorical at the same time. So will the door of the parlour with its bad hinge, which allowed news to travel from the masters to the servants, and will remain a channel of communication for as long as one reads: "'twas the rule to leave the door, not absolutely shut, but somewhat a-jar — as it stands just *now*' (TS, V 6, p. 428, my italics).

Sterne was seeking a 'more authentic reality and a purer time, that of the very book in the process of creation, carrying its movement across the temporal structures that it

absorbs'.²⁷ The most extreme case of this absorption is when Tristram talks about himself being in three different places in France and at different stages of his life, all in the same moment. He is in Auxerre on his Grand Tour with his family as a child, arriving in Lyons on the trip he undertook when trying to improve his health as an adult, and in Toulouse as the narrator who is writing about these journeys:

— Now this is the most puzzled skein of all — for in this last chapter, as far at least as it has help'd me through *Auxerre, I have been getting forwards in two different journies together, and with the same dash of the pen* — for I have got entirely out of Auxerre in this journey which I am writing now, and I am got half way out of Auxerre in that which I shall write hereafter — There is a certain degree of perfection in every thing; and by pushing at something beyond that, I have brought myself into such a situation, as no traveller ever stood before me; for *I am this moment* walking across the market-place of Auxerre with my father and my uncle Toby, in our way back to dinner — *and I am this moment also* entering Lyons with my post-chaise broke into a thousand pieces — *and I am moreover this moment* in a handsome pavilion built by Pringello*, upon the banks of the Garonne [...] where I now sit rhapsodizing all these affairs. / — Let me collect myself, and pursue my journey. (*TS*, VII 28, pp. 621-22, my italics, apart from the word 'Auxerre')

The present tense is the cement and the life of this trick where three layers of experience appear to be compressed into a single complex moment, the 'now' of Tristram's writings. This 'now' allows events to be freed from any dependency upon diegetical chronological order. It creates what Genette calls an achrony (my translation).²⁸ Here, the link, or syllepsis (my translation), which brings the three separate events together in the memory of the narrator and on the page is a geographical one, the town of Auxerre.²⁹ This can be explained by the fact that the whole narrative is at each moment entirely in the mind of its

²⁷ J. J. Mayoux, 'Laurence Sterne', in *Laurence Sterne: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. by John Traugott, p. 121.

²⁸ Genette finds at least two 'structures achroniques' in Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu*. He describes them as the story's ability to have temporal autonomy ('capacité d'autonomie temporelle du récit' arising from the 'mépris de toute chronologie', *Figures III*, pp. 121, 120).

²⁹ Genette defines 'Syllepses (fait de prendre ensemble) temporelles' as anachronic groupings formed by a spatial or a thematic relationship, or by any other type of relationship (*Figures III*, p. 121). Syllepses are a way of obtaining the 'structures achroniques' mentioned above.

narrator; he is a 'master-memory' who has all of the story-time to play with from the start.³⁰ Therefore, within the same chapter, and across different volumes, he can establish, at any time, a multitude of links between all the places and all the moments he wishes to bring together. However, Tristram explains that he pushes 'at something beyond' this 'degree of perfection'. That is, instead of juxtaposing the two journeys in this chapter, the narrator insists on an impossible simultaneity: he claims that he is in the three places at the same time 'I am this moment', 'and I am this moment also', and 'and I am moreover this moment' (see my italics in the quotation above). This simultaneity amounts to a playful explosion of the narrator's unity of being in time and in space, which justifies his need to 'collect' himself afterwards. As a self-conscious narrator, he can write a story, and detach himself both from this story and from himself in the act of writing the story. He not only uses the techniques which are at his disposal as a self-conscious narrator, but he goes behind them and exposes them to the reader. He pushes them to the point where the reader can hardly concentrate on their effect on the story anymore; his attention is drawn towards the technique itself and its artificiality.

Tristram holds all the threads of the narrative in his power, which allows him to play with time and space on a large scale. The pattern can be very complex, as with the tale of 'uncle Toby's amours':

As *Susannah* was informed by an express from Mrs. *Bridget*, of my uncle *Toby's* falling in love with her mistress, fifteen days before it happened [...] — it has just given me an opportunity of entering my uncle *Toby's* amours a fortnight before their existence. (*TS*, VI 39, p. 568)

³⁰ J. J. Mayoux, 'Variations on the Time-sense in *Tristram Shandy*', in Laurence Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, ed. by Howard Anderson (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1980), pp. 571-584 (p. 575).

The reader who has been following Toby's adventures on and off has not reached the stage of his 'amours' in the progression of his reading. To him, they have not happened yet. Moreover, Tristram projects his narration into the living present of his characters, which enables him to state that Toby himself at this stage is not aware that he is in love. The story of the amours is future both for the main actor of the episode – that is, the potential lover, Toby – and for its main spectator – that is, the reader. Yet this story is known to the reader as belonging to Tristram's fictitious past (the story of uncle Toby's amours happened before Tristram was born), and it is presented as being of common knowledge to the other characters who can talk about it as if it had already happened. Thus, the narrator mixes different landmarks in time: the landmark of his reader, that of his characters – which is confusing here since some characters have a more advanced knowledge of the events than others – and that of his narration, which is posterior to any event he relates. This allows him to boast that he can tell the story of his uncle Toby's amours 'a fortnight *before* their existence' (my italics). Before and after, in the imagination of the reader when he tries to configure the story, become much more problematic than they were in *Moll Flanders*, since the landmarks are here to confuse him and mock conventions, and not to mark the chronological progression of the story.

The game is also pursued on a much smaller scale, that of the sentence and the rules of language within it. Time is put to the test in the sentence: '—— a cow broke in (to-morrow morning) to my uncle *Toby's* fortifications' (*TS*, III 38, p. 278). The past tense is made to clash with its adjoining future adverbial phrase of time, which breaks the normal grammatical rules of agreement, thereby deconstructing any chronological logic. Although it is easy to justify the use of the past tense because it refers to events which are anterior to the time when the narrator is writing about them, the reader struggles to understand what

the future refers to. Does it refer to the next morning in the life of Toby at this point in the story? Alternatively, could it be the future of the act of narration? This confusion is due to the very nature of a narrative which has deconstructed chronology, intertwined a multitude of time lines and included in its web temporalities belonging to different periods of time and diegetical levels. It is of no significance whose time 'to-morrow morning' refers to. What strikes the reader is the gratuitous play, not just with basic narrative conventions, but even with elementary grammatical agreement. Thus, this jarring grammar, which would not be accepted in real assertions, shows that, in a fictional world, tenses can lose their grammatical function and their reference to reality.

In common with many eighteenth-century texts, *Tom Jones* and *Tristram Shandy* are self-referential, although they are so to different ends. Where *Tom Jones* foregrounds the didactic purpose of the self-referential moment, *Tristram Shandy*, on the other hand, seeks mainly to play with literary techniques and artificial conventions. The narrator in *Tom Jones* refers to the actual chapters and volumes of his book in his story, and so does Tristram: 'where a Conversation ensued on the Subject of the Bird, so curious, that we think it deserves a Chapter by itself' (*TJ*, IV 3, p. 161); 'In the beginning of the last chapter, I inform'd you exactly when I was born; — but I did not inform you, how. No; that particular was reserved entirely for a chapter by itself' (*TS*, I 6, p. 9). So, in both novels, the sections of the book, such as the chapters, are openly seen as being the receptacles for the content of the story. Receptacle and content seem to go along together in a parallel and harmonious way in *Tom Jones*. They reinforce the feeling of mastery of the plot and of the development of the story given by the narrator. References to previous episodes help the progress of the reader through the long intricate narrative: 'The Squire having settled Matters with his Sister, as we have seen in the last Chapter [...]' (*TJ*, VI 3, p. 279). Others

allow the narrator to justify his narrative selectiveness: 'The Reader may, perhaps, wonder at hearing nothing of Mr. *Jones* in the last Chapter. In fact, his Behaviour was so different from that of the Persons there mentioned, that we chose not to confound his Name with theirs' (*TJ*, V 9, p. 250). Instead, the form of story writing is an endless source of playful experiments for Tristram. Form and content are often made to contrast with each other. For example, the chapter ends before the story: 'I forthwith put an end to the chapter, — though I was in the middle of my story' (*TS*, II 4, p. 104); a sentence is carried over two chapters, giving Trim's entrance a theatrical effect: '— for as he opened his mouth to begin the next sentence, / CHAP. XV. / In popp'd Corporal *Trim* with *Stevinus*' (*TS*, II 14, 15, p. 84). In volume four, chapter twenty-four is torn away. In volume nine, chapters eighteen and nineteen are displaced; the displacement leaves two blank chapters, which triggers Tristram's comment: 'I look upon a chapter which has, *only nothing in it*, with respect' (*IX* 25, p. 785). Fielding's narrator sometimes draws parallels between the end of an event in the fictional world, and the end of a section in the book. In *Tristram Shandy*, instead of a simple parallel between the two, such as: 'the door opened and thus the chapter ended', one reads: 'when the door hastily opening in the next chapter but one ——— put an end to the affair' (*TS*, III 11, p. 212). The sentence 'when the door hastily opening in the next...' prepares the reader, syntactically, for a spatial reference within the diegesis, such as 'room', but surprisingly proceeds to a textual reference: This is more striking than *Tom Jones*'s parallel: 'Thus ended this bloody Fray; and thus shall end the fifth Book of this History', because of the syntactic depth at which the shift between spatial and textual is located (*TJ*, V 12, p. 267). In *Tristram Shandy*, the shift is located within an adverbial phrase rather than across a loose co-ordination between clauses. The reader's confidence in predicting what comes next in Tristram's sentence is based on his knowledge of the English language and on his relying on there being a defined border between the story told and

story telling. The effect on the reader of such syntactic deception is based on the humorous defeat of his expectations. These concrete landmarks take the reader into a fantastic chronotope where the materiality of the book is not just referred to, alongside the story, but mingles happily with the fictitious events.

What is more, in *Tom Jones*, although the narrator presents himself as a spectator to the adventures of the heroes and invites the reader to follow the adventures with him, no party impinges on the other. The characters remain undisturbed in their fictional world; they are not played with. They are chiefly manipulated to suit narrative selectivity and the organisation of the plot, as in the sentence: 'Having thus traced our Heroine very particularly back from her Departure, till her Arrival at *Upton*, we shall in a very few Words, bring her Father to the same Place' (*TJ*, X 9, p. 565). Tristram is a homodiegetical narrator, like Moll Flanders, so that his interventions in the narrative are not as foreign to the fictional world he describes as those of *Tom Jones's* heterodiegetical narrator. In *Tristram Shandy*, the world of the narrator, the world of the fictional characters, and the world of the external reader are brought together, as in *Tom Jones*, but the relationships between the different worlds are more problematic. In *Tristram Shandy*, the narrator feels at one with his creation to such a point that, not only does his nature imprint itself on his writings (as it does in an autobiography), but he claims that his writings modify his emotions:

— For my uncle Toby's amours running all the way in my head, they had the same effect upon me as if they had been my own — I was in the most perfect state of bounty and good will; and felt the kindest harmony vibrating within me [...]. (*TS*, IX 24, p. 781)

Here, Tristram is not a character in the diegesis being influenced by a situation or another character with whom he interacts, as is the case in *Clarissa*. This is also different from Moll Flanders retrospectively explaining how she felt about a situation during her adventures. In

this passage, Tristram the story-teller is influenced by adventures which happened to one of his characters before he was born and who is moved, as he is writing, by the nature of this character who is dead at the time. Another example of the influence of the creation on the creator can be found when Tristram draws a parallel between the progression of his father's misfortunes and that of his narrative. As Walter's plight is reaching its worst point, Tristram claims that his own spirits and his writings are affected by the situation:

I enter upon this part of my story in the most pensive and melancholy frame of mind, that ever sympathetic breast was touched with. — My nerves relax as I tell it. — Every line that I write, I feel an abatement of the quickness of my pulse, and of that careless alacrity with it [...]. (TS, III 28, pp. 253-4)

The game goes much further when characters are shown to have a direct impact on the narration, as when Tristram complains about his uncle's whistling: 'True philosophy — but there is no treating the subject whilst my uncle is whistling Lillabullero (TS, IX 17, p. 769). The gap between the created world of the diegesis and the pseudo-creating extradiegetical world is bridged in a most fantastical way. The reader is used to narrator-authors manipulating their narrative, stopping characters for the purposes of the plot, and, if they are writing in the first person, expressing their feelings about the story – but not to characters preventing narrators from telling their story.

In *Tristram Shandy*, the boundaries between the different worlds are transgressed, and various parties seem to interfere with one another, thereby creating metalepses of different types. In *Tristram Shandy*, as in *Tom Jones*, the narrator addresses the reader as an interlocutor. But, in the same way as the narrator in *Tom Jones* remains a detached spectator to his fictional work, the reader he addresses stays on the outside of the diegesis,

he remains a narratee.³¹ In *Tristram Shandy* however, the reader is not only a witness to the narration; Tristram invites him to join actively in the building of his narrative. For instance, he asks his permission to insert a story in his narrative: 'Will your worships give me leave to squeeze in a story between these two pages?' (*TS*, V 3, p. 419). He requires his help in order to have the strength to continue with his story: 'Now give me all the help you can' (*TS*, IX 20, p. 773). He lets him believe that his opinion can change the course of his writings:

Stay — I have a small account to settle with the reader, before Trim can go on with his harangue. — It shall be done in two minutes. [...] I pray the chapter upon chamber-maids and button-holes may be forgiven me, — and that they will accept of the last chapter in lieu of it; which is nothing, an't please your reverences, but a chapter of chamber-maids, green-gowns, and old hats. (*TS*, V 8, pp. 433-34)

Moreover, very early in the book, the narrator's writings acquire the illocutionary power of real enunciation when he gives orders to his narratee, and carries on writing as if the tasks he gave were accomplished:

_____ shut the door. _____ (*TS*, I 4, p. 6)

A few chapters later, Tristram pretends to be annoyed with a careless female reader, and he sends her back to read the preceding chapter (*TS*, I 20, pp. 64-65). Before she comes back, a whole paragraph has been written which she has not read. This gives the impression that the text does not necessarily need the reader in order to exist. The narration can carry on forward while the act of reading goes backward. Writing and reading can take two different directions, rather than being shown to go side by side. Moreover, the fact that, while the

³¹ Narratee is my translation of Genette's 'narrataire'. Genette warns one against confusing the narratee with the reader, in the same way as one should not confuse the narrator with the author: 'Comme le narrateur, le narrataire est un des éléments de la situation narrative, et il se place nécessairement au même niveau diégétique; c'est à dire qu'il ne se confond pas plus à priori avec le lecteur (même virtuel) que le narrateur ne se confond nécessairement avec l'auteur (*Figures III*, p. 265).

female reader was re-reading the entire chapter nineteen, Tristram only had time to write a short paragraph, shows in a concrete way that time of reading and time of writing – or narrating – cannot be paralleled: writing down words on the page takes more time than reading them. Finally, if an actual reader were to take Tristram's order seriously, every time he reached the sentence: 'I do insist upon it, that you immediately turn back, that is, as soon as you get to the next full stop, and read the whole chapter over again' (*TS*, I 20, p. 65), it would be the end of his forward progress through the text. It would create an infinite loop.

The illusion of a parallel in time between the actions of the characters, the act of narrating the story and that of reading the book created by the present tense and the bringing together of the different diegetical levels allows Tristram to confuse his readers in a playful manner. For instance, he starts a conversation between Toby and Walter in volume one, chapter twenty-one, and he suspends it until volume two, chapter six, in order to give a better portrait of uncle Toby to the reader in the meantime. When the conversation is resumed, the brothers are still wondering how Mrs. Shandy is doing with her labour, and Toby rings the bell to summon the servant. Obadiah is then sent to fetch Dr. Slop. In volume two, chapter eight, Tristram states:

It is about an hour and a half's tolerable good reading since my uncle *Toby* rung the bell, when *Obadiah* was order'd to saddle a horse, and go for Dr. *Slop*, the man-midwife; --- so that no one can say, with reason, that I have not allowed *Obadiah* time enough, poetically speaking, and considering the emergency too, both to go and come; --- tho', morally speaking, the man, perhaps, has scarce had time to get on his boots. (*TS*, II 8, p. 119)

Tristram proceeds to tell the 'hypercritick' that, if measured with a pendulum, the 'true distance betwixt the ringing of the bell and the rap at the door' is 'no more than two minutes, thirteen seconds and three fifths' (*ibid.*). To confuse matters further, Tristram also mentions the fact that 'the idea of duration and of its simple modes, is got merely from the

train and succession of our ideas, --- and is the true scholastick pendulum' (ibid.). Another factor is brought into the equation, which Tristram mischievously complicates, that of the quantity of information and the span of time and the space that the narrator has covered during his digression between the two halves of the conversation:

I would, therefore, desire him to consider that it is but poor eight miles from *Shandy-Hall* to Dr. Slop, the man-midwife's house; — and that whilst *Obadiah* has been going those said miles and back, I have brought my uncle *Toby* from *Namur*, quite across all *Flanders*, into *England*: --- That I have had him ill upon my hands near four years; --- and have since travelled him and Corporal *Trim*, in a chariot and four, a journey of near two hundred miles down into *Yorkshire* [...]. (*TS*, II 8, p. 120)

Trying to untangle the different durations does not bring more sense to the problem. This is because Tristram mentions the bell the second time he deals with the conversation of the two brothers, but includes Toby's action in his calculations as if he had rang it before the digression. Then, he contradicts himself and changes the course of the story, in order to save himself 'dramatically', even if it damns him 'biographically' (ibid.). In effect, after stating that it is eight miles from Shandy Hall to Dr. Slop and that Obadiah 'has been going those said miles and back', he claims that 'Obadiah had not got above threescore yards from the stable-yard before he met with Dr. Slop' (ibid.). Tristram shows his critics that the stretching potential of the narrative in time and space is immense, if manipulated by a creative and imaginative narrator with a good sense of narrative pace and harmony, rather than by a rigorous architect using exact calculations.³² The chastising of the female reader and the lesson to the 'hypercritick' are two examples which destroy the illusion the narrator establishes in *Tom Jones*, that is, that reader and narrator can progress through the book at the same pace as companions in a stagecoach watching the action as it develops. A work

³² For a detailed analysis of the scene, see John Traugott, *Tristram Shandy's World: Sterne's Philosophical Rhetoric* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1954), pp. 40-43.

which would maintain the illusion of a narrating voice could create a reading experience similar to the almost simultaneous acts of speaking and listening. However, Tristram insists more than Fielding's narrator does on the physicality, the materiality, the temporality, and the difficulties of the act of writing.

The narrator not only insists on taking the reader into account, he moreover lets the reader's voice be heard alongside his own. For that purpose, he creates dialogues between himself and imaginary readers which he includes in his fiction, as for example:

— Pray reach me my fool's cap — I fear you sit upon it, Madam — 'tis under the cushion — I'll put it on — / Bless me! you have had it upon your head this half hour. / — There then let it stay [...] And now, Madam, we may venture, I hope, a little to go on. (*TS*, VII 26, p. 616)

Therefore, the message of the fictional work does not go one way any more, from the narrator to the reader. There is what Alexis Tadié calls a 'dissolution du rapport simple qui unit le locuteur à l'allocataire par le biais du texte-message'.³³ This is destabilising for the actual reader who does not feel that he is the only receptor of the text he is reading any more, since another party, also called reader, seems capable of interpreting the narrator's message and reacting to it. The narrator goes so far in his prosopopoeia as to picture and tease the imaginary reader he is addressing:

— Bon jour! — good-morrow! — so you have got your cloak on betimes! — but 'tis a cold morning, and you judge the matter rightly — 'tis better to be well mounted, than go o'foot — and obstructions in the glands are dangerous — And how goes it with thy concubine — thy wife — and thy little ones o'both sides? and when did you hear from the old gentleman and lady — your sister, aunt, uncle and cousins — I hope they have got better of their colds, coughs, claps, tooth-aches, fevers, stranguries, sciaticas, swellings, and sore-eyes. (*TS*, VIII 3, p. 657-58)

³³ Alexis Tadié, 'Tristram Shandy et les problèmes de l'énonciation: le désordre du discours', *Fabula*, 5 (1985), 127-38 (p. 133).

Instead of being a distant mind towards which the text is directed, the reader is a physical being whom the narrator could almost touch. For example, he chooses a female reader as a shy and inexperienced victim for a lesson on the anatomy of feelings and he redirects her finger when she is misled about the place of 'Nonsense': '———— no Madam, — not there, — I mean at the part I am now pointing to with my forefinger' (*TS*, VIII 4, p. 659). Not content with introducing a fictionalised reader in the text as an audience he can interact with, Tristram addresses various readers at different times, or together at the same time.

One reads:

There are a thousand resolutions, Sir, both in church and state, as well as in matters, Madam, of a more private concern. (*T.S.*, VI 16, p. 522)

Rub your hands thrice across your foreheads — blow your noses — cleanse your emunctories — sneeze, my good people! — God bless you. (*TS*, IX 20, p. 773)

— Come! cheer up, my lads; I'll shew you land — for when we have tugged through that chapter, the book shall not be opened again this twelvemonths. — Huzza! (*TS*, V 41, p. 482)

The status of the fictional readers in *Tristram Shandy* is difficult to define. They are on the same narrative level as the narrator (extradiegetical) in the sense that they have access to the printed text, unlike the members of the Shandy family. However, the fictional readers are described and manipulated in a one-dimensional way which makes them appear as having even less of a life of their own than the characters. They are brought to life solely to give his cue to the narrator, and then they disappear in an undefined background. In *Tom Jones*, 'I' can easily be pictured as the narrator-pseudo-author and 'you' as the one-at-a-time person who is holding the book, creating the illusion of an exclusive companionship. Although Tristram maintains a powerful conversationalist style of writing with direct addresses in the present tense, he destroys the illusion of a real conversation by fictionalising a whole audience rather than a single interlocutor, and printing their answers. Providing ready-made answers to the narrator's addresses usurps the actual reader from his

part in the tacit arrangement which unites author and reader around a book: that of responding to the text. It makes one tend to see Tristram's game as 'a self-imposed dizziness' where no audience is needed.³⁴

In *Tom Jones*, there is a clear delimitation between the story of the characters, the addresses to the reader and the introductory chapters. Firstly, the essays on the form of the fiction are placed in the first chapters of each book. Although they include some comments about the development of the story of the heroes, they almost exclusively deal with the theories behind the shaping of the novel. Secondly, the main bulk of the book is devoted to the story of Tom and Sophia and is narrated in the past tense. When compared with the purely functional quality of Moll's addresses to the reader, one finds a rich complexity in the feelings arising from the relationship established between the narrator and the reader in *Tom Jones*.³⁵ Yet, the story is essentially interrupted by the narratorial voice at turning points in the plot, or when there is a need for clarification: 'But before we proceed to what passed on his Arrival in the Kitchin, it will be necessary to recur to what had there happened since *Partridge* had first left it on his Master's Summons' (*TJ*, X 6, p. 548). The narrator's intrusions do not attempt to deconstruct the tale in any major way; they do not interfere with the workings of the plot. The punctuation, the co-ordinating conjunctions, the clear mention of the various parties involved, all contribute to clear-cut grammatical transitions between the different narrative levels when they are brought together: 'Jones therefore left him to enjoy his Nap; and as the Reader may perhaps be, at this Season, glad

³⁴ Richard A. Lanham, *Tristram Shandy: The Games of Pleasure* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1973), p. 96.

³⁵ The thesis provides a thorough treatment of the relationship between the narrator and the reader in *Tom Jones* in chapter four.

of the same Favour, we will put an End to the Eighth Book of our History (*TJ*, VIII 15, p. 486).

One of the problems addressed below is that of the relative complexity of *Tristram Shandy*'s metaleptic usage even when compared to Diderot's *Jacques le fataliste et son maître*. *Jacques le fataliste* was written in 1773, only five years after the last instalment of *Tristram Shandy* came out, although it was first published posthumously in 1796. It is directly inspired by *Tristram Shandy* and it also uses the metalepsis as a narrative device. In his 'Introduction to a Variation', printed in the 1985 Harper and Row English Edition of *Jacques le fataliste*, Milan Kundera acknowledges the great influence of *Tristram Shandy* over *Jacques le fataliste* before proceeding to emphasise the differences between the two novels:

Sterne discovered the immense possibilities for playfulness inherent in the novel, thereby opening a new path for its evolution. But no one heeded his "invitation au voyage". No one but Diderot. [...] If the similarity between Sterne and Diderot is so striking, it is only because their common enterprise has remained isolated in the history of the novel'.³⁶

Diderot is more daring in his bringing together of different narrative levels than Fielding is. In *Jacques le fataliste*, he uses various metalepses, between the world of his readers and the world of the narrator-author, between the latter and the world of his characters and *vice-versa*. For example, Jacques's action bears direct consequences on another character within the story, and on the extradiegetical narrator: 'Le lendemain Jacques se leva de grand matin, mit la tête à la fenêtre pour voir quel temps il faisait, vit qu'il faisait un temps détestable, se recoucha, et nous laissa dormir, son maître et moi, tant qu'il nous plut' [moi

³⁶ Milan Kundera, 'An Introduction to a Variation', translated by Michael Henry Heim (http://www.artobello.de/Kundera/Info-Point/introduction_into_variaton/introduction_into_variaton.html, 1985), accessed 15 June 2001.

= the narrator].³⁷ The most frequent metalepses are caused by the questions the narratee asks and which are unexpectedly inserted in the narrator's comments: '— Qu'est-ce que ce poète? — Ce poète... Mais si vous m'interrompez, lecteur, et si je m'interromps moi-même à tout coup, que deviendront les amours de Jacques?' (*Jacques le fataliste*, p. 72). Although the story of Jacques's journey is frequently interrupted, it constitutes the main narrative. Diderot's text is easier to follow since there is a chronological progression, and it concentrates on a smaller number of different stories and issues than Sterne's does. The game with the reader is successful, but the illusion of interdependence between the voices is limited. This is due to the fact that the dialogues of the two protagonists are well delimited by speech headings and separated from the narrator's comments by a paragraph division. Moreover, within the dialogues each new character is introduced clearly apart from the others.

This is not the case in *Tristram Shandy*, where any attempt at linear progression is thwarted, and where the characters, fictionalised reader, and narrator's comments intermingle without transition, bringing together their respective chronotopes. The layout of the text on the page and the punctuation mainly create the confusion. For instance, at the very beginning of the book, two conversations, one between intradiegetical characters, the other between extradiegetical narrator and fictionalised reader, are put on the same level and alternate without clear delimitation, and this across two chapters:

Pray, my dear, quoth my mother, have you not forgot to wind up the clock?
 — *Good G—!* cried my father, making an exclamation, but taking care to moderate his voice at the same time, — *Did ever woman, since the creation of the world, interrupt a man with such a silly question?* Pray, what was your father saying? — Nothing.

³⁷ Denis Diderot, *Jacques le fataliste et son maître*, ed. by Yvon Belaval (Manchecourt: Gallimard, 1973), p. 132.

CHAP. II.

— Then, positively, there is nothing in the question, that I can see, either good or bad. — Then let me tell you, Sir, it was a very unseasonable question at least, — because it scattered and dispersed the animal spirits [...]. (*TS*, I 1 and 2, p. 2)

The personal pronouns 'I', 'you', and 'me', and the possessive pronouns 'my' and 'your' reinforce the confusion between the speakers who are not clearly named and announced. It is interesting to note that the italics, which distinguish the characters' reported speech from the narrator's and the reader's voices in the first chapter, disappear in the next chapters and volumes. From then on, their speech is introduced simply by a dash and sign-posted by phrases in between two commas such as 'quoth my father', 'he would say', 'my father would say', and 'replied my uncle Toby'. These phrases, which reveal to the reader who is speaking, are always placed after or in the middle of the characters' sentences, not before them. Thus, there is no real introduction to their speech, the voice is 'heard' first, and one is kept in suspense about their identity a little longer. This technique reinforces the feeling of spontaneity and liveliness one experiences when reading *Tristram Shandy*, and the narrator can play with the confusion he creates in the mind of the reader. Although Walter's thoughts and reported speech, in volumes one, chapters sixteen and eighteen (pp. 48, 53) for instance, are introduced by inverted commas, this only occurs very sporadically throughout the book. Thus, obvious signs which could help in differentiating between the voices are not very often used by Sterne. Moreover, the signs used have various functions, which adds to the confusion; for instance, the inverted commas also serve to introduce quotations from other written works, or from famous people's words (III 11, pp. 205-11 for Ernulphus's curse; I 20, p. 65 for Pliny the younger). The dash, which is often a sign of a different character starting a sentence, is also the main rhetorical and rhythmic tool of the

narrator.³⁸ This can be seen in the example quoted above where the last dash does not announce a new speaker but marks a pause before Tristram's explanation. In addition, many sentences uttered by the characters when placed at the beginning of a new chapter, for instance, do not start with a dash (see *TS*, III 18, p. 222, III 23, p. 243).

There is a particular mixture of voices and narrative levels in volume three, chapters thirty-one to thirty-three. In volume three, chapter thirty, Tristram leaves his father and uncle in the bedroom brooding over the loss of Tristram's nose. Chapter thirty-one starts abruptly with a dialogue between Tristram's great-grandfather and great-grandmother. It is followed directly by Tristram's address to the reader. Then, one is given, without transition, a discussion between Tristram the narrator and his friend Eugenius on the word 'crevice' which was printed in the first instalment of *Tristram Shandy*. Tristram addresses his readers once more. Chapter thirty-two starts by giving the continuation of the dialogue between Tristram's great-grandmother and great-grandfather, interrupted by comments from the narrator. Chapter thirty-three starts with a conversation taking place, again without transition, between two new characters, Tristram's grandmother and grandfather. Characters belonging to different time-schemes are brought together by the same theme, the nose, forming a thematic syllepsis. The discussion about noses starts in volume three, chapter thirty, after Walter Shandy is put to bed to grieve the loss of his son's nose. It continues in volume four with Slawkenbergius's Tale, and ends in volume four, chapter two, when Walter recovers his spirits. Moreover, the dialogues of the characters in the diegesis (here, Tristram's family) are presented on the same level as dialogues between extradiegetical characters, the narrator and his friend making comments on the book itself.

³⁸ For a study of Sterne's dash see: Anne Bandry, 'Tristram Shandy ou le plaisir du tiret', *Etudes Anglaises*, 41:2 (1988): 143-54.

Whereas in the quotation from the first chapter of the book Tristram and his fictionalised reader were discussing the story as it was being told (in the making), here Tristram presents a commentary on a previous instalment which has been printed and can be looked at and judged. This *mise en abyme* of the narrative is introduced in the text without warning, as if it belonged amongst Tristram's comments on the progression of the story and the dialogues of his ancestors. Eugenius, who clearly cannot belong to the world of the book since he can comment upon a printed version of it, is nevertheless brought into the world of fiction in a discussion with Tristram:

— Here are two senses, cried *Eugenius*, as we walk'd along, pointing with the fore finger of his right hand to the word *Crevice* [...]. — And here are two roads, replied I, turning short upon him, — a dirty and a clean one, — which shall we take? — The clean, — by all means, replied *Eugenius*. (*TS*, III 31, p. 258)

In *Tristram Shandy*, the links between narrative levels and different times and places are established in such an intricate way that they create an illusion of simultaneity and of interdependence of voices that is unique to Sterne's style and close to polyphony.³⁹

It seems that, in *Tristram Shandy*, instead of having a movement towards realism and suspension of disbelief, there is a movement towards fictionalising, or 'shandying' everything that is mentioned in the book and should be exterior to the world of fiction. Thus, not only theories (scientific, medical, philosophical), friends of Sterne such as John Hall-Stevenson, Garrick and Reynolds, potential readers, but also, as in the passage that follows, other texts of fiction, bear the stamp of Sterne's narrator and are swallowed into his fictional creation. Slawkenbergius's tale is presented as being a translation by Tristram from an original Latin text (part of which is included on the opposite pages). It contains

³⁹ The polyphonic aspect of *Tristram Shandy* is addressed in detail in chapter four of the thesis.

some confusion between two voices: that of the author and that of the translator, which creates a problem of authority over the text. There are many signs which indicate that Tristram appropriates the story and makes it his own. The first obvious sign is that the reader is only given a small part of the so-called original text (six pages in Latin for the thirty-one pages of the Tale in English in the Florida edition). Then the English translation takes over totally, not leaving any trace of the text of reference for the reader to make comparisons or check points if he wishes to do so. The style in which the English text is written is very Shandean, with many more dashes than the Latin text, and as Howard Anderson stresses in his edition of *Tristram Shandy*, 'Tristram takes some liberties with the "story-telling Latin" in his translation, exploiting wherever possible its sexually suggestive potential'.⁴⁰ This is reinforced by some of Tristram's comments in brackets, as, for instance, when he describes the stranger's breeches and adds '(appendage to them, which I dare not translate)' (*TS*, p. 295). Moreover, a large part of the Tale is devoted to a parody of learned discussions by the medical faculty, which is one of Tristram's hobbyhorses (*TS*, pp. 306-15). Howard Anderson also notices that the final page of the Tale is Sterne's parody of the way that 'traditional tales are often shaped (or distorted) to explain complex historical events' (*TS*, Anderson, ed., note 6, p. 196). Towards the end of the tale, one reads: 'We left the stranger behind the curtain asleep — he enters now upon the stage' (*TS*, p. 318). This passage is not between brackets and there is no sign that it belongs to the translator. One cannot help recognising Tristram's techniques of characterisation in this sentence. It strongly recalls the passage where Tristram can proceed to write his preface since some of his heroes are asleep, others busy upstairs, and Trim making mortars. In addition, there are

⁴⁰ A point made by Howard Anderson in Laurence Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy Gentleman*, ed. by Howard Anderson, p. 176, note 1.

three other passages in *Tristram Shandy* where the word 'stage' is used to refer to the place where Tristram's characters evolve as actors, or sometimes it seems, as puppets, as the phrase 'exhibit my uncle *Toby* dressed in a new character' suggests:

[...] Will not the gentle reader pity my father from his soul? [...] to look down upon the stage, and see him baffled and overthrown in all his little systems and wishes [...]. (*TS*, I 19, p. 63-4)

[...] all which put together, must have prepared the reader's imagination for the entrance of Dr. *Slop* upon the stage [...]. (*TS*, II 8, p. 120)

I beg the reader will assist me here, to wheel off my uncle *Toby*'s ordnance behind the scenes, — to remove his sentry-box, and clear the theatre, *if possible*, of horn-works and half moons, and get the rest of his military apparatus out of the way; — that done, my dear friend *Garrick*, we'll snuff the candles bright, — sweep the stage with a new broom, — draw up the curtain, and exhibit my uncle *Toby* dressed in a new character, throughout which the world can have no idea how he will act [...]. (*TS*, VI 29, p. 549-50)

The use of the personal pronoun 'we', in 'We left the stranger behind the curtain asleep — he enters now upon the stage', is puzzling (*TS*, p. 318). It gives rise to several possibilities. It should refer to Slawkenbergius, being the storyteller, and to his reader. Yet, in order to read it this way, Tristram's reader would have to be willing to disregard the similarity of tone and topic of this sentence with some of Tristram's. It would be easy, here as it is elsewhere in *Tristram Shandy*, to read 'we' as being Tristram and his reader. The equivocation is such that one could almost read 'we' as Tristram and Slawkenbergius, the translator having appropriated Slawkenbergius's original text to such a point that he only occasionally takes the trouble of acknowledging him. The direct address to the 'geographical reader' is also part of Tristram's style, as he addresses several types of readers such as the female reader, the 'hypercritick', and the male reader (*TS*, p. 323). The other stylistic device which is so familiar to Tristram's style is the equivocal aposiopesis which leaves the responsibility of the bawdiness to the reader. An example of this device can be found at the end of Julia's letter to Diego, when the heroine languishes for her lover:

'If the gentleness of your carriage has not belied your heart, you will fly to me, almost as fast as you fled from me — haste as you will, you will arrive but to see me expire. — 'Tis a bitter draught, *Diego*, but oh! 'tis embitter'd still more by dying *un*——'. (TS, p. 321)

Straight after this, Tristram includes a comment which reinforces the doubt and the tease about the meaning of the word: '*Slawkenbergius* supposes the word intended was *unconvinced*, but her strength would not enable her to finish her letter' (ibid.). The fact that Tristram's comment should not be between brackets here, as his comments mostly are elsewhere in the tale, confirms that the text is wavering, or slipping, between the two authors. The use of brackets is not always respected. For example, one reads: '(cries *Slawkenbergius*)' (TS, p. 316); and 'Alas, alas! cries *Slawkenbergius*' (TS, p. 324). There are also instances where one is not sure whether the text in brackets is Tristram's comment or whether the text which is not in brackets should belong to Tristram:

[...] with the blast of which his soul (*being steep'd in guilt*) sailed before the wind, into the lake of hell fire. (TS, p. 311)

[...] as he rode [...] with so sweet an air of careless modesty [...] as would have put the heart in jeopardy (*had his nose not stood in the way*) of every virgin who had cast her eyes upon him. (TS, p. 304)

It happened — *I must not say unluckily for Truth*, because they were giving her a lift another way in so doing, that the two universities [...]. (TS, p. 310)

This, says *Hafen Slawkenbergius*, constitutes the catastrophe or peripeitia of my tale — *and that is the part of it I am going to relate*. (TS, p. 318, my italics in these four quotations, except for the surname)

This last quotation is to be found just before the puzzling phrase 'We left the stranger behind the curtain asleep', which reinforces the confusion created by the personal pronoun 'we'. Moreover, both parties relate the story: the author and the translator. Consequently, we are left in a quandary as to which of the two is the main teller, the one who has the authority to say 'I'. The concluding part of the tale does not seem to solve the problem:

Alas! alas! *cries Slawkenbergius, making an exclamation* — it is not the first — *and I fear* will not be the last fortress that has been either won — or lost by
NOSES.

The END of

Slawkenbergius's TALE.

(TS, p. 324, my italics except for the surname)

Who has the final word, Slawkenbergius, or Tristram? The comment which directly follows the exclamation is Tristram's, and yet it is not in between brackets; so we can deduce that it is possible for the passage I put in italics to belong to Tristram too. It is questionable whether the words 'the end of...' really give back its due to the original author. If one adopts the view that Slawkenbergius's Tale never existed in its own right, that it is a fictional pseudo-creation of Tristram's, one is faced with a complete reversal of expectations and of analysis. There is no confusion of narrative voices, no competition for authority, because there is only one voice, Tristram's. The editors of the Florida edition of *Tristram Shandy* state: 'it seems evident that Sterne was a competent Latinist and we see no reason to believe that a source exists for his "Fabella". Indeed, it seems likely that Sterne wrote the English version and then translated it into Latin' (TS, vol. III, editors' note 289.1-2, p. 279). If the confusion of authority arising from the tale is fake, it is nevertheless powerful, and it ridicules accusations of plagiarism or heavy borrowings directed towards Sterne. Tristram the narrator can play at appropriating someone else's text and show how inoffensive the game is at the same time. Sterne presents us with the artefact of an original which is, in fact an original artefact.

Whereas in *Tom Jones* the reader is pulled in two different directions, that of a narrative in the past tense moving towards a finished product, and that of a narration in the present tense which makes him pay attention to the processes of reading and writing, in *Tristram Shandy* the present tense overpowers any attempt of the narrative to follow an orderly chronological progression with an end in view. The game Sterne plays with time and space makes *Tristram Shandy* appear to the reader like a never-ending and vertiginous conversation which gathers past, present, future, and parties of all diegetical levels almost

simultaneously into the world of his book in one rich present tense, that of Tristram in the act of writing. Thus, the feeling of spatiality created by the gathering of the various voices is stronger than the impression of the sequential development in time of a plot. The narrator who describes himself physically in the act of writing and imparts the reader with his moods, who proves that he is the indispensable element of his creation, whose narrative has the tone of a conversation, who gives his readers tasks to accomplish, and who opens his text to different voices – thus bridging the gap between the worlds of the creator, the creation and the reader – creates a strong sense of presence and communication which could lead the reader to mistake the fictional ‘I’ and ‘you’ in *Tristram Shandy* for Sterne and himself.⁴¹ So, although in the reading of *Tristram Shandy* one finds it hard to believe that the world of the book is true to life and the events actually happened (which was the ‘Réalisme’ attempted by Richardson or Defoe), one is tempted to believe that it is possible to participate in the making of the book and to develop a co-operative friendship with the narrator-(pseudo)author. This different type of ‘Réalisme’ lead Marie-Hélène Chabut to make a pertinent remark about Barthes’s distinction between ‘lisible’ and ‘scriptible’:

Si l’écriture peut faire croire qu’elle est en train de s’écrire avec ‘moi’, et elle le peut, puisque beaucoup de travaux sur *Tristram Shandy* insistent sur la participation du lecteur, alors la distinction toute théorique faite par Barthes (dans *S/Z*) entre un texte ‘lisible’ (‘classique’) et ‘scriptible’ (‘que nous lecteurs, créons, écrivons en quelque sorte par et à travers notre lecture’) devient beaucoup plus problématique qu’elle ne le semble tout d’abord. En effet, tout texte n’est-il pas ‘lisible’, c’est à dire compréhensible, vraisemblable par rapport à tel ou tel système de valeurs, et ne sommes-nous pas, à un degré plus ou moins grand, manipulés par une écriture à la croire ‘scriptible’? (Chabut, pp. 404-05)

Yet if, on the one hand, Tristram is shown skilfully exploiting the literary techniques which enable him to create the almost perfect illusion of a ‘texte scriptible’, on the other hand, he

⁴¹ Marie-Hélène Chabut, ‘*Tristram Shandy* ou l’histoire de l’écriture’, *Dix Huitième Siècle*, 19 (1987), 391-409 (pp. 403-05).

cannot help taking the game further, and he comically exposes the illusion of his writings as an open-ended task which requires the help of the reader for their realisation. Hence, he creates *mises en abyme* where his own text is scrutinised; he proves that reading and writing are not concomitant processes; and he brings into the text his own imaginary audience of readers and critics. Moreover, by fictionalising an audience with which he interacts, as well as claiming that his characters have a direct influence on him, Tristram drags himself into the fiction, making it harder for the actual reader to associate him with the actual author. There is a fascinating double movement in *Tristram Shandy*, whereby one experiences vividly the energy of the pseudo-creator and the liveliness of his creation, and at the same time one is made acutely aware that the words resounding in our mind belong to a printed artefact.⁴²

In *Moll Flanders* and *Tristram Shandy*, the protagonist is the narrator of the story and its pseudo-author. In *Clarissa*, an epistolary novel, there is no external narratorial voice to the letters. Thus the story is what Genette defines as a 'récit à focalisation interne multiple' (*Figures III*, pp. 206-07). That is, the narrator does not know more than the character (here, they are the same person), and the same event can be mentioned more than once from the point of view of different narrators. The letter-writers are homodiegetical. They are

⁴² It is interesting to note that some of these implications are being addressed in so called hypertexts. It would be tempting to think that, two centuries later, hyperfiction is the perfect means through which the reader can participate in the creative process on the same level as the author, simply because he can choose between the many paths the author has created for the unfolding of the narrative, and he is not so much a prisoner of the continuous linear progression of the text. Yet, the reader's choices of paths, the number of possibilities he can come up with, and even the number and types of possible endings of the story, are all controlled by the author who carefully creates nodes and links between the sections beforehand. Moreover, the author of a hyperfiction can create dead ends, infinite loops, and guard links – a guard link prevents a link from yielding until another link has been followed in that reading. Thus, the reader's path through the multidirectional text of a hyperfiction also follows the organising spirit of its author and is predetermined. Hyperfictions which allow the reader to make his own links between the nodes through the text are extremely rare. I am indebted to Mr. Colin Gardner for raising my awareness of the issues of boundary and linearity in hyperfiction in his paper 'Seeming Seamlessness: Ambiguous Pronominal References and Other (Con)textual Ambiguities in Hypertext Fiction', presented at the Bakhtin Centre, The University of Sheffield, May 1997.

introduced as first-degree narrators by an alleged editor who reserves himself the right to amend the text if deemed necessary after the publication of the first two volumes as they are. The narratives are shaped and coloured by the narrators' personality and state of mind. Hence, one obtains a portrait of the narrators from the way they write, even more than from what other characters say of them. Writing constitutes the main action in the book. The narrators pay attention to the time it takes to write their stories, to the conditions in which they are writing, and to the best way of conveying the events, impressions and details they experience. Throughout the novel, parallels are drawn between writing and living, between the emotions experienced and the impact they have both on the writers and on their styles. Thus, for example, when Clarissa is persecuted from inside by her family and from outside by Lovelace, she sometimes finds it difficult to write to Anna with a steady hand:

For, methinks, my sentences drag; my style creeps; my imagination is sunk; my spirit serves me not.⁴³

The pen, through heaviness and fatigue, dropped out of my fingers at the word *indebted*. I resume it to finish the sentence. (*CL*, L. 78, p. 320)

Don't you see how crooked some of my lines are? Don't you see how some of the letters stagger more than others! — That is when this interview [with Lovelace] is more in my head than my subject. (*CL*, L. 91, p. 368)

The rape is the only crisis in Clarissa's life which damages the great clarity of her style, and almost destroys her capacity to write as it almost destroys her capacity to live. When she recovers and can control herself again, her epistolary mastery returns.

In *Clarissa*, writing takes on such an importance that the heroine seems to spend more of her time with a pen in her hand than actually living. It is an outlet that she cannot do without, which seems indispensable to her mental health when she faces a crisis. It is because her movements are so restricted that Clarissa's writings, more than those of the

⁴³ Samuel Richardson, *Clarissa or the History of a Young Lady*, ed. by Angus Ross (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1985), L. 40, p. 187. All further quotations from this edition of *Clarissa* will be referred to in the main text as *CL*.

other characters, parallel and even prevail upon the pace of her life. Her entrapment translates in a flow of liberating letters. The writings are thorough and lengthy enough to mirror life realistically and to follow its intensity. Since her narration is long and very detailed, the time of reading can closely follow the pace of Clarissa's life. Writing, living and reading, action and fiction, form and content are brought closely together. As Ian Watt writes, 'everything was subordinated to the aim of expressing the ideas passing in the mind at the moment of writing' (*The Rise of the Novel*, p. 194). The length and frequency of the letters convey a feeling of excessive writing, and the gap between the time of action and the time of writing is extremely reduced. This literary technique enables Richardson to explore the 'here and now' of experience. In the 1759 preface to *Clarissa*, Richardson talks about his work as being:

written while the hearts of the writers must be supposed to be wholly engaged in their subjects: the events at the time generally dubious — so that they abound not only with critical situations, but with what may be called instantaneous descriptions and reflections. (*CL*, p. 35)

The story has slowed to include minute details – the 'particulars' which are so dear to the characters. Thus, Anna's opening letter asks facts to be written 'in [...] full a manner' by Clarissa (L. 1, p. 40). Clarissa answers her: '[I] will be as minute as you wish me to be' (L16, p. 87). Lovelace has made the same promise to Belford: 'Thou claimest my promise that I will be as particular as possible in all that passes between me and my goddess' (L. 99, p. 399).

The fascinating aspect of Richardson's novel is to be found in the analysis of every detail and in the psychological reactions of the characters to a multitude of small crises. Consequently, and despite the small number of major events, the reader does not lose his thirst for what happens next. He vividly experiences it on a smaller scale, and asks himself: 'what happens in the next hour, in the next few minutes?' This is due to the perpetual

tension the characters are under, which they voice almost instantaneously and with a great sensitivity, so that the reader eagerly awaits an outburst or some relief. As the numerous small crises are blown out of proportion because of Clarissa's emotional nature and Lovelace's love for intrigue, suspense and anxiety are predominant feelings. The fact that events and thoughts are mostly related straight after they have happened and even sometimes as they are happening, and the fact that emotions run high while the characters are writing, reinforce the feeling of immediacy. Because of the small scale of most events, one feels that what matters is crucial and still at hand: 'All is in a hurry below-stairs. Betty is in and out like a spy. Something is working, I know not what. I am really a good deal disordered in body as well as mind. Indeed, I am quite heart-sick!' (CL, L. 80, p. 328). The suspense is great when Clarissa is expecting Lovelace at any minute in the Ivy summerhouse and writing to Anna: 'The wench is gone. The time of meeting is at hand. Oh that he may not come! — But should I, or should I not, meet him? — How I question, without possibility of a timely answer!' (CL, L. 91, p. 369). This narrative technique, with no external narrator's point of view to take into account, implies that both the characters and the reader are unaware of their long-term future and uncertain about the short-term one. When Clarissa's family starts being kind to her again and for no purpose as far as she herself can see, she exclaims: 'this was to be a day of puzzle to me. *Pregnant puzzle*, if I may so say — for there must great meaning lie behind it' (CL, L. 75, p. 294). The suspense makes the reader feel more hooked than he does in a story such as *Moll Flanders*, where Moll as a narrator knows more than Moll as a character and than the reader, and often gives clues about the future development of events. Moreover, in *Clarissa*, the reader's only guide, without an exterior omniscient narrator, as in *Tom Jones*, is his analysis of the style and content of the letters and the comparisons he can establish between the different viewpoints. The letters play a complex role. They are cathartic, as they help both Clarissa

and Lovelace to express their desires, fears, and frustrations. They are a means of sharing information in situations where distance and confinement prevent direct contact between the correspondents. Sending or giving letters is a major weapon in the confrontations between Lovelace and Clarissa, but also between Clarissa and the members of her family. Their exchange and the time spent waiting for their arrival contribute to the tension and suspense of the novel. Finally, for the reader, the letters are a mirror into the motives and the personality of their pseudo-authors and their arrangement constitutes the organisation of the plot.

Time of consciousness surreptitiously mixes with clock time in the letters, as daily routine, meetings, and the surprises and dangers the protagonists experience are all tightly intertwined with their deep reflections, inner fights, anxieties and expectations. The book and its time-scheme are open to subjectivity and the story seems to grow naturally from the actions and thoughts of the characters rather than to be directed by an all-powerful organiser such as *Tom Jones's* narrator. In *Clarissa*, form and content could be said to achieve a symbiosis when the pace of the narrative matches the intensity of the events experienced by the protagonists:

But now I hear the rusty hinges of my beloved's door give me creaking invitation. My heart creaks and throbs with respondent trepidations. Whimsical enough though! For what relation has a lover's heart to a rusty pair of hinges? — But they are the hinges that open and shut the door of my beloved's bed chamber! — Relation enough in that! (*CL*, L. 175, p. 575)

Syntax and punctuation powerfully illustrate how the writings of the characters and their emotions merge. Preston explains that, in Fielding's novels, there are long and complete sentences which tend towards the full stop in order to reinforce the effect of continuity and completeness. On the other hand, in Richardson, the syntax is often broken as if under

'unusual stress'.⁴⁴ There are long passages in the past tense, which are summaries of past events. Nevertheless, the present tense is used at length to reproduce in a lively style external conversations from an immediate past as they were uttered. In addition, the present tense, combined with dashes, question marks, exclamation marks, and words in italics, help to convey the reactions of the writers engrossed in the events of the moment in a direct, emotional and powerful way:

Why, why will the dear creature take such pains to appear all ice to me? — Why will she, by *her* pride, awaken *mine*? — Hast thou not seen, in the above, how contemptibly she treats me? — What have I not suffered *for* her, and even *from* her? — Is it tolerable to be told, that she will despise me, if I value myself above that odious Solmes! — (*CL*, L. 103, p. 413)

Thus, 'Richardson shows how [syntax] collapses under pressure of the "Cartesian moment"' (Preston, p. 42). Because one is dealing with emotions and psychology, the flow of the narrative cannot be regular; it follows the mutability of human temper, the strong feelings and uncertainties in transitory situations, and the anguishing moments when they feel that nothing is ever going to change. Moreover, fragmentation is inevitable in a novel which uses the epistolary style where letters are written to be exchanged, as opposed to narratives written by one narrator retracing with regularity the story of her own life such as *Moll Flanders*. Thus, letters are interrupted naturally, when time runs out or when the message is communicated: 'I will not acquaint you with all proceedings here; but these shall be the subject of another letter' (*CL*, L. 28, p. 135). The interruption is often abrupt when a danger is approaching: 'an interruption obliges me to conclude myself, in some hurry as well as fright' (*CL*, L. 14, p. 84). It helps to convey the pathos of a full heart when the heart is full: 'the very repetition of this fills me with [...] concern [...]. I can write no

⁴⁴ John Preston, *The Created Self: The Reader's Role in Eighteenth-Century Fiction* (London: Heinemann, 1970), p. 44.

more; mistinesses of all the colours in the rainbow twinkling upon my deluged eye' (CL, L. 45, p. 205). The major interruption in the writings concerns an event presented as a likely climax as the story develops, that is, the rape of Clarissa by Lovelace. Much tension in the protagonists' writings originates from the likelihood of Lovelace's taking physical possession of Clarissa. The rape is a crucial moment in itself. It is the apogee of Clarissa's sufferings, and what Lovelace believes to be her complete submission to him. Yet, the rape comes very late in the story. It is not written about when it happens and it is only reported later in indirect terms. The gap it creates in the narration makes it very powerful technically. It stands out all the more as the reader, who is used to a lot of written material even on trifling details, suddenly faces a blank, the absence of words concerning a major event. This could be the sign that the rape does not mark Lovelace's final victory over Clarissa. What actually matters is that it is the turning point which leads the heroine to her transfiguration. Thus, what is emphasised straight after the rape, and what Richardson devotes most text to, is the long story of Clarissa's preparations for her death. The fragmentation in *Clarissa* imitates that of life, with its unexpected events and its emotions, and it is that of literary suspense, where the reader must be left wanting more information.

The present tense which is used in the letters is pregnant with meaningful information about future developments. It is also imbued with the consequences of past actions and conversations which are unravelled little by little, as the story becomes more complex. The reader is given a sense of temporality, of complex psychological duration, and of the weight of fate. He is thrown into a critical present which constantly brings imperceptible changes as it is charged with new meanings and implications. Frederick Karl explains that 'time considerations cause a mythical, clouded past to exert pressures on the seemingly "open" present, until both past and present appear enwrapped in fateful, inexorable actions.

Since this latter is the point of the novel, technique and matter have blended' (Karl, p, 334). The protagonists, and Clarissa in particular, make us share their every moment, thought and feelings, sometimes even presentiments of which they are not yet aware, and this with such immediacy that one feels granted a unique feeling of intimacy. However, this feeling is tainted by a certain frustration since, one stage removed from the fictional recipients of the letters, the reader is a powerless spectator in front of the tragedy. For example, Anna Howes recedes into the background after Clarissa is taken to London, and they do not see each other until after Clarissa's death. She is Clarissa's closest friend but is not able to protect her from her fate. Belford only steps into an active role when the irreparable has been done. Then he becomes the executor of Clarissa's will but he has no way of influencing her resolution to die. Moreover, the reader's intimacy with the lives of the characters through their writings, and in particular with *Clarissa*, is mixed with a feeling of uneasiness. For instance, Lovelace is portrayed as a villain for intercepting and reading Clarissa's correspondence without her consent or knowledge of it. Yet, this is also what the reader of the novel is made to feel he himself is doing. Voyeurism is thus experienced powerfully on two levels: the reader condemns Lovelace for his tendency, and at the same time, he finds out that his own reading is partly driven by an unsound curiosity and a desire for omniscience and control over Clarissa's fate.

In *Clarissa*, the moment lived intensely, rather than the whole scheme, is emphasised; how problems appeared and how they can be resolved, rather than when they are happening, is put forward. This forces the reader to immerse himself in the inner struggles and the outer fights of the characters for control over their destinies. The movement of the reader's involvement, created by realistic, quasi-immediate and minute descriptions, is more inward than forward. It creates a fascination for the workings of the protagonists'

contrasted relationships which produce the dangerous game they are playing. Diderot was an enthusiastic admirer of Richardson and he praised his sense of realism, of the concrete and striking detail: 'L'illusion! Il ne s'agit point, en effet, de démontrer la vérité, mais de la faire sentir'.⁴⁵ Yet, the realism of writing to the moment has major consequences for the reading process in *Clarissa*: mainly, the extraordinary length of the narrative and the handing over of the selective process to the reader. As Ian Watt explains,

the very lack of selectiveness, indeed, impels us to a more active involvement in the events and feelings described: we have to pick significant items of character and behaviour out of a wealth of circumambient detail, much as in real life we attempt to gather meaning from the casual flux of circumstance. (*The Rise of the Novel*, p. 193)

One could speak of a different type of selectiveness rather than of the lack of it. The details are selected by Richardson through his pseudo-writers so far as they help the reader to get as close as possible to the inner life of the protagonists, and not mainly in order to contribute to actions geared to the development of an ordered plot, as they mostly do in *Tom Jones* for example. The inner life never stops, it is a flow much richer than the actual events one experiences physically, and which can be ordered chronologically and numbered. Yet, in *Clarissa*, even though the various narrators are closely in touch with their inner lives, their thoughts and feelings are not reported in a stream of consciousness as twentieth-century writers, such as Virginia Woolf, attempted to do. Instead, Richardson makes his characters use the medium of letters, which is a conscious means of communication. A striking example of this is when Clarissa openly writes to her brother that, if this letter 'in a style different from [her] usual', it is because the pleading tone she has used so far have subjected her to 'much scorn and ridicule' (*CL*, L. 53.I, p. 226). She

⁴⁵ Denis Diderot, *Œuvres complètes*, éd. J. Assédat, M. Tourneux, 20 vol. (1875-1877), vol. V, p. 215, in *Jacques le fataliste et son maître*, ed. by Yvon Belaval, p. 16.

declares: 'it is time [...] that I should endeavour to assert my character, in order to be thought less an *alien*, and *nearer of kin to you both*, than either of you have of late seemed to suppose me' (ibid.). Moreover, the characters' thoughts and actions are re-created by a language conveying not only subjective impressions, but a certain concern for style, clarity, and, in Lovelace's case, for pomposity and parade. Sabine Volk Birke describes Lovelace's behaviour in his letters in an enlightening way:

Lovelace the author casts himself in his letters as his own player, whom he can watch, and admire or ridicule at leisure. Writing in this sense is not the spontaneous expression of individuality, but the creation of a world in which his persona plays the key part.⁴⁶

Letter writing is a very powerful tool, but a very deceiving one as the forgeries and the misinterpretations show.

Time in an epistolary novel is a virtual time which needs a reader to be enacted more so than in any other type of novel because it awaits for readers both in its intradiegetical world and in its extradiegetical world. The present tense of these letters is a sort of permanent present whenever it is read, and the immediate past linked to this present also retains its immediacy. The whole story is revived at each reading with its emotional impact. The power of the present tense and the accumulation of details bring the reader closer to the life and heart of its 'authors', however self-conscious their medium is. The reader's role is enhanced and his engrossment in the text is deeper, even though he is carefully guided in his interpretation by Richardson's selectiveness in what he wants to show us. The scenes in the present tense have:

the accent and the feel of a real presence. Yet we do not lose our sense that it is being told, and that it is important to the teller. Even more, we are conscious

⁴⁶ Sabine Volk Birke, 'Emotions Created in Letters: Individuality and Writing in Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa*', *Anglistentag*, 13 (1991), 429-41 (p. 432).

that it is written, that the reader, therefore, is also important to the teller. [...] Such writing keeps open the transactions between literature and reality. (Preston, p. 52)

Fictional texts which use the present tense as their main narratorial tool make more demands on the reader, who is not given such an ordered, chronological, sign-posted story to follow. They leave it to him to establish the links between the various sequences, which all appear equally important as they are all told with the same presentness, the same proximity to the teller. The referential illusion which makes the reader forget that he is reading words on the page is broken, and is replaced by a more insidious and powerful one, that of the book as *being* written at the same time as it is read. In a novel such as *Clarissa*, the empathy with the characters, and in particular with the heroine, is rendered very powerful by this technique, where almost nothing gets in the way between the letters and the reader. In *Tristram Shandy*, one is constantly jostled around and teased, but with the unique feeling that one experiences intimately the wonderful creative power of Tristram's mind in each of its moves.

As we have established in this chapter, the choice of a main tense for the narration plays a crucial part in the reader's engrossment in the text and his relationship with the narrator. In the following chapter, a study of the beginnings and endings of selected novels, combined with a detailed analysis of certain elements of narrative progression and continuity, will help to define further the type of reading experience the reader of these works faces. It will determine whether the story aims at carrying the reader forward towards a meaningful denouement or whether the focus is on each moment of the journey through the text. In order to achieve this, it will analyse which particular narrative mechanisms are used to achieve the emphasis chosen.

CHAPTER TWO

Beginnings and endings

In an attempt to find general characteristics in eighteenth-century English novels, one is faced with the novelty of the genre, and the strong idiosyncrasy of its authors. Yet, one can notice that, on the one hand, some novels of the eighteenth century have a tendency to be written with their completion in view, and their movement is linear and uni-directional. They can contain digressions, or variations in the way they begin or end, but the aim is the continuity and progression of the story in time and in space until order is re-established and happiness is achieved – or death has struck the protagonists. On the other hand, some novels are more concerned with the processes of writing and reading and, even though they follow a plan, the emphasis is on each moment, the ‘here and now’, rather than on the consequences that certain events will have on the end. Many critics have noticed these two tendencies in eighteenth-century literature. They attribute them to various causes but reach similar conclusions. For A. A. Mendilow, Classicists and Romanticists had different views of time. The former saw ‘the past as an accreting cumulation of independent events and states which were complete in themselves and could be laid, as it were, side by side, fixed in a uniform medium for the curious to survey’. The latter ‘tended to look on human nature and human development in terms of the organic unity underlying the process of history, the growth of the individual’; [...] ‘the tradition which that civilisation embodied was a contemporary condition of all living existence, always and inevitably part of the

Now'.¹ For Max Byrd the two tendencies are due to the evolution of literature from 'the Augustans and Johnsonians as authors of a literary "product", finished, polished, regular, and the new age that presents instead a work in the very act or "process" of becoming'.² Morris Golden is also sensitive to the disparity and explains it by the 'mid-eighteenth century's acute transitional nature, of which a great developing vision is Hume's destruction of causality' which 'fosters such an unconcern with synthesis; at any rate, the dominating figures – Sterne, Johnson, Goldsmith, Smollett [...] – are conspicuously unable or unwilling to imitate life as a mass of conflicting details capable of harmonious probable resolution'.³

The question of limits and boundaries is a major issue when a work of fiction is created: where to start, what to select, how to round off the story or whether to round it off at all. Yet, however much one starts at the beginning when telling a 'realistic' story – whether orally or in a fictional written narrative – choosing a beginning implies leaving out a more distant past. The reader can never be given the whole web of elements and causes which bear consequences on the story he is reading. Sterne parodies this convention of realism when Tristram, his narrator, boasts about beginning '*ab ovo*', which is even closer to the moment of origin than birth (*TS*, I 4, p. 5).⁴ In the same way, rounding off the story because its development has reached the end of the plot is seen by E. M. Forster and many readers of the twentieth century as lacking originality. Choosing an end to a story is necessarily

¹ A. A. Mendilow, *Time and the Novel* (New York: Humanities Press, 1952), p. 4.

² Max Byrd, *Tristram Shandy* (London: Unwin Critical Library, 1988), p. 48.

³ Morris Golden, 'Periodical Context in the Imagined World of *Tristram Shandy*', *The Age of Johnson: A Scholarly Annual*, 1 (1987), 237-60 (p. 258).

⁴ Ironically, a footnote in the Howard Anderson's edition of *Tristram Shandy* indicates that Horace praises Homer for *not* beginning the *Iliad* with the conception of Helen, but for starting in *medias res*, during the Trojan War instead. See Laurence Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, ed. by Howard Anderson (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1980), I 4, p. 4, note 7.

artificial. In a story offering a strong referential illusion, it is hard to accept that the life which has been developing in the story simply stops with the death or the marriage of the protagonists. E. M. Forster deplors the fact that, towards the end, the plot always seems to take over the feeling of life one can experience in reading a book:

Why is it necessary? Why is there not a convention which allows a novelist to stop as soon as he feels bored? Alas he has to round things off, and usually the characters go dead while he is at work, and our final impression of them is through deadness. Incidents and people that occurred at first for their own sake now have to contribute to the denouement – there is a disastrous stand-still while logic takes the command from flesh and blood. If it was not for death and marriage I do not know how the average novelist would conclude.⁵

Yet, there is something reassuring about a neat ending. It shows the primacy of order and harmony in the work of fiction over the chaos of life. If the reader can predict the conclusion from the clues he is given during his reading, it creates a sense of control over the characters' destiny, a control which human beings yearn for in reality.

Starting at the beginning and rounding the story off with a neat predictable ending were conventions Defoe and Fielding applied to *Moll Flanders* and *Tom Jones*. They both introduced a sense of their awareness of the artifice of this procedure, but the reader is asked to accept the conventions nevertheless. *Moll Flanders*'s life is told to us from its beginning, when her mother 'pleaded her Belly' in order to avoid her sentence for 'a certain petty Theft', was transported, and left Moll with travelling people (*MF*, p. 8). To the simple sequentiality of her life appears to be added a sense of temporality as Moll feels destined to undergo the same fate as her mother. This threat originates from deeds which are anterior to the beginning of the novel and which can be summarised in one word: Newgate,

⁵ E. M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel*, 1927 (London: Penguin Books, 1974), p. 102.

the Place where my Mother suffered so deeply, where I was brought into the World, and from whence I expected no Redemption, but by an infamous Death: To conclude, the Place that had so long expected me, and which with so much Art and Success I had so long avoided. (*MF*, p. 273)

In this quotation, it would be easy to read both the mother and Newgate as an image of the womb or place of origin. In this case, though, coming back to the womb does not entail regeneration but inescapable death. Although there is an attempt here to add depth to the linear narrative, the whole of her mother's story at the beginning of the novel only takes up two short paragraphs (*MF*, p. 8). When she meets her mother in the colonies, her role is mainly to unveil the unnatural status of Moll's marriage with her own brother, and not to warn her of any danger about Newgate. Instead, she shows her daughter how well criminals like her can do in the Colonies. Moreover, the sense of fate is rarely felt in the development of the novel, which makes Moll's statement about the 'place that had long expected [her]' linked to her mother's actions sound artificial. After a series of unsuccessful marriages and liaisons, necessity drives Moll to theft: 'Poverty [...] harden'd my Heart, and my own Necessities made me regardless of any thing' (*MF*, p. 194). At the beginning of her criminal life, she also mentions that she would 'gladly have turn'd [her] Hand to any honest Employment if [she] could have got it' (*MF*, p. 198). However, after her first major successes, Moll confesses to her greed: 'as Poverty brought me into the Mire, so Avarice kept me in, till there was no going back' (*MF*, p. 203); and: 'the Avarice join'd so with the Success, that I had no more thoughts of coming to a timely Alteration of Life' (*MF*, p. 207). Later, seeing Moll's mastery, her governess, who has 'a Share of the Gain, and no Share in the hazard', pushes her to keep up the trade (*MF*, p. 214). Nevertheless, when in 'good Circumstances', Moll states: 'my Governess often said I was the richest of the Trade in *England* [...]. I could not forbear going Abroad again [...] any more than I could when my

Extremity really drove me out for Bread' (*MF*, p. 253). As Moll gets closer to her capture, she confirms that she is hardened in crime:

Fortune had smil'd upon me to that degree, and I had Thriven so much, and my Governess too, for she always had a Share with me, that really the old Gentlewoman began to talk of leaving off while we were well, and being satisfy'd with what we had got; but, I know not what Fate guided me, I was as backward to it now as she was when I propos'd it to her before, and so in an ill Hour we gave over the Thoughts of it for the present, and in a Word, I grew more hardn'd and audacious than ever, and the Success I had, made my Name as famous as any Thief of my sort ever had been at *Newgate* and in the *Old-Bayly*. (*MF*, p. 262)

Therefore, it is easier to read her persistence in committing crime as the reason for her inevitable fall, rather than the 'Fate' she mentions in the quotation above or because the 'Devil's Clutches' were holding her 'fast there as with a Charm' (*MF*, p. 203). Moreover, the phrase 'I grew more hardn'd and audacious than ever, and the Success I had, made my Name as famous as any Thief of my sort ever had been at *Newgate* and in the *Old-Bayly*' is revealing of the feeling of pride which accompanies Moll's successes. This leads her to be 'more audacious' than ever, thus less cautious. Moll often insists on the fact that her conscious decision to exercise caution is what prevents her from being caught when her fellows are: 'I resolv'd from that time forward to be very Cautious how I Adventur'd upon any thing with them' (*MF*, p. 209); 'I used more caution before I undertook a thing, and had more Presence of Mind when I was to bring my self off' (*MF*, p. 220); 'Here again my old Caution stood me in good stead' (*MF*, p. 221). If one considers this fact, one finds the flaw which leads to her capture. As the proverb goes, 'Pride goes before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall'.⁶ Finally, *Newgate* only becomes a threat when Moll starts her career as a thief, and it runs through the narrative as the obvious threat to a thief until she

⁶ Proverbs 16:18, in *The Holy Bible, New International Version* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1984), p. 673.

does end up there. Yet during her career as a thief, no real link is made with her mother's fate: the emphasis is rather on the number of times her 'colleagues' are caught and she escapes despite the risks she is running. Other people expect her to end up there, but not her:

I grew the greatest Artist of my time, and work'd myself out of every Danger with such Dexterity, that when several more of my Comrades run themselves into *Newgate* presently, and by that time they had bee Half a Year at the Trade, I had now Practis'd upwards of five Year, and the People at *Newgate*, did not so much as know me; they had heard much of me indeed, and often expected me there; but I always got off; tho' many times in the extreamest Danger. (*MF*, p. 214)

Thus, Defoe's attempt at thickening the sequential development of his story with the spectre of fate remains on the surface, as it is not elaborate enough to absorb the reader's imagination.

David Higdon states that 'Moll is a creature of the present moment until the conversion enables her to hold past, present and future together as a related coherent unit'.⁷ Several factors go against this theory. As the thesis established in chapter one, Moll's story is episodic, and she does leave her past behind every time she moves on. Although she never ponders for long on her past, Moll links events together on several occasions, and this, even before her conversion. For instance, as she is about to marry the banker, she reflects:

Then it occur'd to me what an abominable Creature am I! and how this innocent Gentleman going to be abus'd by me! How little does he think, that having Divorc'd a Whore, he is throwing himself into the Arms of another! that he is going to Marry one that has lain with two Brothers, and has had three Children by her own Brother! one that was born in *Newgate*, whose Mother was a Whore, and is now a transported Thief; one that has lain with thirteen Men, and has had a Child since he saw me! (*MF*, p. 182)

⁷ David Higdon, *Time and English Fiction* (London: Macmillan, 1977), p. 58.

Her conversion brings a religious significance to her history, and allows her to sprinkle moralistic comments retrospectively throughout the narrative. But, as we demonstrated in chapter one, her interest in financial comfort outweighs by far her interest in the development of her soul. After her stay in Newgate, she is on the move again, takes care of the journey to the Colonies, settles down with her Lancashire husband, meets her son, and benefits from her inheritance. She still seizes opportunities as they come along. Moreover, she does not act out of character. After her conversion, she is deceitful to the very people who care for her when need be. For instance, when still in Newgate, she does not tell the truth about her past life to her Lancashire husband (*MF*, p. 298); and she hides her reasons for wanting transportation to the minister who led to her conversion (*MF*, p. 306). She does not tell her governess that Jemy is her husband (*MF*, p. 310); she flirts with the Boatswain, and lets him believe she is flattered by his attention until she knows for sure that her husband is coming with her (*MF*, p. 312). When in the colonies, she lies to her husband and lets him believe that her son is her cousin (*MF*, p. 339); and she does not quiver at the thought of giving a stolen gold watch as a present to her newly found son (*MF*, p. 338). Finally, she benefits with a light heart from the comfort brought by the stolen goods she left in England (*MF*, p. 312). She does not display contrition and a behaviour built upon her rejection of her previous life of sin. So, her conversion does not mark a particular time of unification between her past life, her present repentance, and the start of a future Christian life. Moll and the pseudo-editor in the preface claim that she has greatly changed after the conversion and her story is repeatedly presented as a model of the victory of Christian virtues and of the fact that repentance is rewarded, no matter how detestable the crimes committed are. At least, this is the message on the surface. Whether the irony the reader

perceives was planned by Defoe, or is a result of the conflict between wanting to present an entertaining story without shocking his public, has been debated by many critics.⁸ One could say that the only change between before and after the conversion is that Moll gets repeatedly lucky, and in a durable way, so that she no longer needs to go to the criminal extremities she was driven to in the past. She is a 'creature of the present moment', even after her conversion, and until, in her old age, she sits down to write her story (Higdon, p. 58). This is the main time when Moll looks back, orders the episodes of her life, and retraces her impressions and emotions.

In the preface, the editor plainly states that he chooses to stop the story 'before the end'. This decision reinforces the impression of realism Defoe wants to give to Moll's life, since, thanks to this device, the characters seem to outlive the written text:

We cannot say indeed, that this History is carried on quite to the End of the Life of the famous *Moll Flanders*, [...] for no Body can write their own Life to the full End of it, unless they can write after they are dead [...]. [...] In her last Scene [...] many pleasant things happen'd, which makes that part of her Life very agreeable, but they are not told with the same Elegancy as those accounted for by herself; so it is still to the more Advantage that we break off here. (*MF*, p. 5)

The story begins with the heroine's birth; it contains numerous rather brief episodes well ordered in time and following up in a clearly defined succession of places; and it finishes when life is not likely to bring any serious change to her present situation until death, when the plot has been rounded off. The full cycle of Moll's life has been drawn and nothing interesting is worth adding, so that the more complete tale of the story of her life written by a third hand, which is mentioned in the passage above, is redundant. Therefore, although

⁸ For a summary of the various critical views on irony in *Moll Flanders*, see Larry L. Langford, 'Retelling Moll's story: the editor's preface to *Moll Flanders*', *Journal of Narrative Technique*, 22:3 (1992), 164-79 (note 1, p. 176).

the story does not end with the death of the protagonist, it ends with Moll and her favourite lover being happily re-united in England after their time in the plantations:

We are now grown Old: I am come back to *England*, being almost seventy Years of Age, my Husband sixty eight [...] And now notwithstanding all the Fatigues and all the Miseries we have both gone thro', we are both in good Heart and Health [...]. (*MF*, p. 342)

The story is written by Moll in her old age, and the distance created by the number of years which separate her story from her narration simplifies rather than complicates her sense of time, as it attenuates many of the emotional details and immediate reactions. So that, for example, when telling the story of her conversion, and how she felt at the time, Moll explains: 'I relate this in the very manner in which things then appear'd to me, as far as I am able; but infinitely short of the lively impressions which they made on my Soul at that time' (*MF*, p. 288). As we have seen in chapter one, the reader faces a text which contains a few asides but no real digression and no parentheses which would help to give more substance to it. The pace of events is very quick, summaries and ellipses are very frequent, and the scenes are rather short and reduced to essential conversations quite often summarised by Moll. The narrative is not exactly sketchy, since there are many detailed and lively descriptions which help the reader to 'picture' scenes of the life of a thief in the society of the time, but, as we have established above, there is little evidence of a complex temporality behind the sequence of events.

Moll Flanders gives a very succinct view of the life of its protagonist, but it covers an extensive period of Moll's life, until her old age. The story of *Tom Jones* begins with the description of the background in which the hero is going to appear, his finding as a baby, and a portrayal of the main characters (*TJ*, I 2). Fielding, like Defoe, tries to convey the impression that his story is only a part of the lives of his characters:

In that Part of the western Division of this Kingdom [...] there *lately* lived (and *perhaps lives still*) a Gentleman whose Name was *Allworthy* [...]. (*TJ*, I 2, p. 34, my italics except for the surname)

Tom Jones offers a shorter period of the life of its protagonists than *Moll Flanders*, but it also leads its readers to the end of a cycle, the time when Tom and Sophia, still young people, have overcome the obstacles which prevented them from being united. In his praise of realism, the narrator also points to the fact that the denouement of a story risks appearing artificial or contrived. This is why, in his chapter on the Marvellous, halfway through the book, the narrator criticises 'modern Authors of Comedy'. Their heroes are 'notorious Rogues' and their heroines 'abandoned Jades' who turn into 'worthy Gentlemen' and 'Women of Virtue and Discretion' in the fifth act, when 'there is, indeed, no other Reason to be assigned for it, than because the Play is drawing to a Conclusion' (*TJ*, VIII 1, p. 406). Towards the end of the story, he denounces the Ancients' use of mythology, the Arabians' and Persians' tales with 'Genii and Fairies', and claims that he rejects any 'supernatural Assistance' to save his hero from the tricky situation in which he finds himself (*TJ*, XVII 1, p. 876). He pretends to leave it to Tom himself to 'extricat[e] himself from all his distresses' and states:

This I faithfully promise, that, notwithstanding any Affection which we may be supposed to have for this Rogue [...] we will not do Violence to the Truth and Dignity of the History for his Sake; for we had rather relate that he was hanged at *Tyburn* (which may very probably be the Case) than forfeit our Integrity, or shock the Faith of our Reader. (*ibid.*, pp. 875-6)

Despite the narrator's circumspection about improbability, this passage is not meant to constitute a real threat to Tom's happy fate. The reader knows he is reading a comedy where 'all's well that ends well', that the circle will be drawn even if it takes away the impression of freedom that can be given to the characters over the plot. However, he does not know how the happy ending will come about. Sheldon Sacks explains:

In a comedy like *Tom Jones* the effectiveness of the work depends largely upon Fielding's ability to create an illusion that Tom is in serious difficulties while at the same time reassuring us, by every comic device at his command, that Tom will extricate himself or be extricated from those difficulties. Our interest is always centred on how Tom will do it, not on whether he will do it.⁹

The narrator's comment about the affection that he has for the hero adds an ironically emotional dimension to his benevolent treatment of Tom within the story. It confirms the hero's function in the work, which is to represent the virtues Fielding praises: innocence and good-heartedness. Nothing bad can happen to Tom, and the characters themselves make positive statements about the denouement as the story develops. Mrs. Fitzpatrick comforts Sophia, who seems more dejected than her, by saying: 'Perhaps all may yet end better than either you or I expect' (*TJ*, XI 6 p. 591); and Mrs. Honour writes to Tom 'I don't question butt thatt u wil haf Madam *Sofia* in the End' (*TJ*, XV 10, p. 825). Moreover, the narrator's insistence that the end could be tragic according to fate and probability is part of the game with the reader which consists in keeping a sense of suspense and excitement about what happens next (*TJ*, XVII 1). The remarks about the ending of stories are also an opportunity for Fielding to criticise other methods of writing and to re-affirm his position and his style. Instead of having recourse to the supernatural to round off the story, the narrator's superior skills enable him to make the best use of his carefully planned plot where previous characters, who have been scattered tactically, come to the rescue of the beloved and righteous hero in time for him to be re-established in his right and to marry Sophia.

Moreover, in *Tom Jones*, the heroes do not undergo any major changes in nature as do those of the 'modern Authors of Comedy' Fielding criticises. Unlike the heroine of

⁹ Sheldon Sacks, *Fiction and the Shape of Belief: A Study of Henry Fielding with Glances at Swift, Johnson and Richardson* (Berkeley: University of Chicago Press, 1980), p. 22.

Richardson's *Clarissa*, who learns from her mistakes and becomes more and more conscious of what other people around her are really like, as well as of her own strengths and weaknesses, Tom does not experience major spiritual or moral growth. The comic hero has to leave home because of undermining pressures around him. He is young, impulsive and makes mistakes throughout the story. Tom is capable of understanding the lessons of life taught to him by the people he meets on his journey, and as such, he gains a better knowledge of life and its traps. But Fielding shows us that it is the qualities of the protagonist's noble and generous heart displayed from a very early age, which, in the end, win the heart of his beloved and of his adopted father. Thus, it is society and Tom's family and friends who become fully aware of the hero's good nature, rather than the hero himself undergoing major changes of behaviour and personality. In fact, Tom's impetuosity, which leads him into trouble, is not judged as evil. Rather, it is a trait in his nature which simply delays his full recognition rather than questions it. Moreover, Tom's rash actions have a positive consequence, since in the end they help in revealing the evil nature of more cautious and poised characters such as Blifil. Order is re-established thanks to a complex network of circumstances and to the final acknowledgement of Tom's qualities.

The metaphor of the stage-coach pertains to *Tom Jones*, since the book could be seen as an extremely well-mapped journey which leads the reader in time and in space, with some pauses and some apparent wanderings, steadily on the way to the concluding stage where the characters are out of trouble, the story completed and the narrator can take his leave as entertainer. Although there is a realistic approach to story telling in *Tom Jones* – the narrator keeps 'within the Rules of Credibility' (*TJ*, VIII 1, p. 406), Genii and Fairies are not to be found, and characters evolve in familiar surroundings such as woods, inns, streets and lodgings – the actual chronotope of the events taking place is a selective one; not

everything on the journey is worth telling. Mendilow explains that 'Fielding, and all who use the episodic technique, aim at selection, not necessarily causal, of events chosen on the grounds primarily of their intrinsic, independent interest' (*Time and the Novel*, p. 77). So, in *Tom Jones*, there are descriptions of places, and historical facts are mentioned, but they mostly appear as an intrinsic part of the story of Tom's and Sophia's journey towards finding each other again, as the time and place which are necessary for the adventures to take place, for chance meetings to happen or not. The narrator explains his intention to depict at length only the 'extraordinary' scenes. He does not want to travel 'slowly through Centuries of monkish Dulness' in 'a Stage-Coach, which performs constantly the same Course, empty as well as full'. This was what the historian had been in the habit of doing in order to 'preserve the Regularity of his series' (*TJ*, II 1, pp. 75-76). Michael Rosenblum links the role of the extraordinary in *Tom Jones* to Bakhtin's chronotope of adventure time in which "'X'" marks the spot where the paths cross or do not cross and that makes all the difference'. He points to the fact that 'the mark of the extraordinary is the coincidence, a "falling together" in time or space. The more unlikely the "fit" in space and time, the more remarkable the event, the more narratable it is'.¹⁰ Rosenblum comments on the difference between *Tom Jones* and *Tristram Shandy*:

In striking contrast, Sterne always makes circumstance "the principal thing considered". Tristram claims that circumstances "give everything its size and shape," and Yorick professes to be "governed by circumstances." [...] Sterne's narrative journey is always deliberate and attentive to circumstances that turn up along the way. Each circumstance has a weightiness, a claim to relevance not circumscribed by its relation to the whole. Where Fielding's principle of framing is centripetal (only what is at the point of intersection need be give representation), Sterne's is centrifugal: more important that "X," the point of intersection, is everything that surrounds it. (Rosenblum, p. 164)

¹⁰ Michael Rosenblum, 'Why What Happens in Shandy Hall Is Not "A Matter for the Police"', *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 7 (1995), 147-64, reprinted in *Critical Essays on Laurence Sterne*, ed. by Melvyn New (New York: G.K. Hall, London: Prentice Hall, 1998), pp. 159-174 (p. 163).

Although the two authors have diverging views on what one should concentrate on in order to tell a story, one needs to moderate Rosenblum's claim, since the two novels are not antithetical models of centrifugal and centripetal forces. *Tom Jones* is not a short and concise piece of writing in which gravitation shrinks everything to the demands of the plot. Unlike the narrative of *Moll Flanders* which is almost entirely devoted to a sequential development of the story, in *Tom Jones*, one finds digressions, comments, stories and descriptions which are entertaining in their own right, for their satirical force, their pastiche of traditional forms of narrative, or their attempt to create a playful and educative relationship with the reader. Tristram, on the other hand, is more selective than Fielding's narrator in the number of chosen key events. Tristram concentrates on a rather small amount of events and themes to which he keeps coming back, even if peripheral matters seem to take over. Thus, 'X' matters, since the intersections are crucial to Tristram's life, and they form the landmarks around which the narrative flights can happen. There is a constant mock-battle in *Tristram Shandy* to keep track of the narrative lines (rather than one narrative line) despite the digressions, the interruptions, and the blanks which stretch them sometimes beyond recognition. Rather than simply exemplifying a centrifugal force, *Tristram Shandy* shows the comic tension, the pulling and pushing of the two forces (centripetal and centrifugal) fighting each other.

In *Tom Jones*, characters are portrayed in a variety of chosen critical situations rather than immersed in the gradual development of every-day life. Even when, towards the end of the novel, the pace of the narrative is closer to the pace of the life of the protagonists, only the events which will bring some change in the course of actions are described. This, together with the narratorial comments, strongly compels the reader to form an opinion on the personalities of the characters according to how they act and react in those decisive

moments. Opinion forming in *Tom Jones* is part of the reader's understanding of and participation in the book. There is a strong sense of moral righteousness which is at the source of the choice of the characters depicted. It guides the development of the story and brings it to its conclusion, a conclusion in which order – the moral order which fits Fielding's philosophy of life – is re-established. It is important for the reader to concentrate on the nature of the characters as it is presented in their actions, rather than in the thoughts and introspection which can be analysed through the writings of the characters in *Clarissa*. In effect, the development of Fielding's story is closely linked to the display of the human values the narrator wishes to present as a model and of the human faults he sharply criticises. However, opinion forming is also at the source of the humour, the irony and the playfulness of the book. The narrator relies on his reader to form an opinion of his characters and takes pleasure in creating unpredictable developments in the plot so that the reader is surprised. The reader is often led to refine his opinion of a character and, as a consequence, his feelings about the course of actions. For instance, in the affair of Tom's relationship with Molly Seagrim, both Tom and the reader are led to believe that the girl, although not a woman of virtue, has been wronged by Tom who got her with child. This leads Tom to say: 'whatever may be my Fate, [...] let me succeed in my Intercessions for the poor Girl. I confess I have corrupted her' (*TJ*, IV 6, p. 193). Tom blames himself for his growing love for Sophia, as he considers his fidelity to Molly as a duty: 'He had sworn eternal Constancy in her Arms, and she had as often vowed never to outlive his deserting her. [...] His own Heart would not suffer him to destroy a human Creature, who, he thought, loved him, and had to that Love sacrificed her Innocence' (*TJ*, V 4, p. 222). But his admiration for Sophia, who seems to return the compliment, leads him to visit Molly with an offer of money, in the hope that because of 'her extreme Poverty, and chiefly her egregious Vanity, (somewhat of which hath been already hinted to the Reader) [...]

notwithstanding all her avowed Tenderness, she might in Time be brought to content herself with a Fortune superiour to her Expectation, and which might indulge her Vanity, by setting her above all her Equals' (*TJ*, V 5, p. 227). Upon finding Square in Molly's bedroom, and learning from her sister that Will Barnes, 'a Country Gallant' took her virtue first and might be the father of the child, Tom entrusts Molly to the care of Square, and his heart is free to concentrate on his feelings for Sophia, the all virtuous (*TJ*, V 6, p. 234). Thus, the faults in Molly's character which the narrator hinted at are fully exposed, and her anger at losing Jones is instantly appeased by Square: 'partly by Caresses, and partly by a small Nostrum from his Purse, of wonderful and approved Efficacy in purging off the ill Humours of the Mind, and restoring it to a good Temper' (*TJ*, V 6, p. 233). The woman Tom thought to be constant proves to be very fickle. She then proceeds to turn 'all that she said to Jones, and Jones himself into Ridicule, and vowed, tho' he once had the Possession of her Person, that none but Square had ever been Master of her Heart' (*TJ*, V 6, p. 234). This episode frees Tom from his feelings of self-blame, and reinstates him in the reader's good books. In addition, it allows Tom and the reader to have concrete proof of the hypocrisy of the philosopher who 'was a less violent, was a much more artful Man; and [...] he hated Jones more, perhaps, than *Thwackum* himself did' (*TJ*, IV 11, p. 194). Square was the one to have chosen to use his knowledge of Tom's affair with Molly to stamp 'in the Mind of *Allworthy* the first bad Impression concerning Jones' (*TJ*, IV 11, p. 196). Ironically, he insisted on the fact that Tom's earlier 'Sacrifice of Truth, which we both imagined to have been made to Friendship, was, in reality, a Prostitution of it to a depraved and debauched Appetite' since 'he supported the Father in order to corrupt the Daughter' (*TJ*, IV 11, p. 195). Nevertheless, after being found out, he is made to agree with Tom: 'what can be more innocent than the Indulgence of a natural Appetite? or what more laudable than the Propagation of our Species?' (*TJ*, V 5, p. 233). Although one knows that

one is reading a comedy in which the protagonists are chosen because they represent the 'winning' virtues whatever happens, one is readily absorbed by the elaborate and humorous web of causes and consequences which involves numerous satellite characters and a great number of twists and turns.

The plan of *Clarissa* is also carefully conceived, and the disposition of the letters matches the development of the plot. The first period is situated at Harlowe Place where numerous family crises decide Clarissa's fate. This period is mostly seen and written by Clarissa and Anna. In the middle section, there is a shift which corresponds to Lovelace's rise in power. Nine weeks elapse. In the first three weeks, where 'Lovelace is relatively well-behaved', most letters are written by Clarissa, but the number of letters written by Lovelace increases.¹¹ In the next three weeks, which end in the fire, Lovelace is gaining power and the great majority of letters comes from him. In the last three weeks, which end with the rape, sixty-two out of the sixty-five letters are written by Lovelace, who has reached the peak of his influence. After Clarissa's arrest and until her death, when Clarissa has escaped from Lovelace, Belford is the main narrative voice as he is both Lovelace's friend and Clarissa's executor. In this last period, Clarissa and Lovelace write the same number of letters (Hilles, p. 245). Not only is the correspondence well organised, but also the chronology of the story is very precise and the dating of the letters is carefully planned. The only times letters are not in chronological order occur when the author is deliberately withholding information from the reader in order to keep a certain suspense; or because he wants the reader to discover the information at the same time as the characters in order to

¹¹ Frederick W. Hilles, 'The Plan of *Clarissa*', *Philological Quarterly*, 45 (1966), 236-48 (p. 245).

share their emotions – mostly shock and horror when Clarissa discovers another of Lovelace's wickednesses. Hilles reminds us of the overall time-scheme of the book:

The novel begins in January; it ends in December. Clarissa leaves home in the spring; the sordid climax occurs in June (actually on Midsummer night); she dies in September, shortly before the autumnal equinox; and Lovelace is killed in December, a few days before the winter solstice. (Hilles, p. 238)

Although the story covers just under a year of the life of the characters, *Clarissa* starts and ends with a duel, as in a cycle, and both protagonists die within this short cycle. Contrasts and echoes keep the thread of the text tight and homogeneous, as the editor remarks:

A more elaborate analysis would reveal a more elaborate symmetry, with earlier passages in letters, or episodes, finding their answering voices in later parts, and effective juxtapositions of powerful and affecting writing or action with comic narrative and 'low' scenes. The variety and strength of this well-worked-out texture lie in the careful manipulation of point-of-view and self-examination, as well as comment and judgement. (*CL*, Introduction, p. 23)

When the story begins, Clarissa is already a sensible young woman who is full of charm and wit. From the start, most of the elements which are going to drag the protagonists to their respective fates are already there to be uncovered. The first letter of *Clarissa* is written by Anna to Clarissa and mentions events which have already taken place in the Harlowe family about which she wants an account: 'I am extremely concerned, my dearest friend, for the disturbances that have happened in your family' (*CL*, L. 1, p. 39). Clarissa's letters 2, 3, and 4 are devoted to an extensive clarification of the situation, and the fourth letter ends with a copy of the 'Preamble' to her grand-father's will in which he donates his estate to 'his dearest and beloved grand-daughter Clarissa Harlowe' (*CL*, L. 4, pp. 53-54). This legacy is one of the main causes for the bad treatment the heroine is given by her family, since, according to Clarissa, it has estranged her from her 'brother's and sister's affections and has raised a jealousy, with regard to the apprehended favour of my two uncles, that now overshadows their love' (*CL*, L. 2, p. 41). The beginning *in medias res* with Anna's

request for particulars about the past may appear slightly contrived since Anna has already been informed about what she is asking Clarissa, so that Clarissa writes:

In order to set this matter in a clear light, it is necessary to go a little backward and even perhaps to mention some things which you already know; and so you may look upon what I am going to relate as a kind of supplement to my letters of the 15th and 20th of January last. (*Clarissa*: L. 13, p. 76)

The details, Anna explains, will be used in order to 'gratify those who know not so much of your affairs as I do' (*CL*, L. 1, p. 40). But, from Clarissa's fifth letter onwards, this technique allows for the narrative to progress in the present, step by step, together with a slow but regular inclusion of portraits and events from the past which help the reader to understand the motives for the characters' actions and reflections. Thus, suspense is maintained throughout the story thanks to missing links or gaps in the knowledge of the reader as well as of the characters. The suspense is all the greater for the epistolary technique which only allows the reader to be informed by one correspondent, or one pair of correspondents at a time, so that neither readers nor characters are given the real motives for the actions and reflections of the other side. The uncertainty remains until the reader can read letters from the other set of characters, and the characters, through informers, can have an insight into them. For example, when Lovelace takes Clarissa away from her home, she suspects that the man who frightens her away is Joseph Leman: 'My fright and my distance would not let me be certain; but really this single man had the air of that vile Joseph Leman, as I recollect' (*CL*, L. 94, p. 381). The next letter, from Lovelace to Joseph Leman (Sat. 8 April), is antedated to the escape (Sun. 9 April), and to Clarissa's letter to Anna (Tues. 11 April). It discloses *a posteriori* the plot between the master and the agent which confirms Clarissa's impression to the reader (*CL*, L. 95, pp. 383-85). The heroine has an answer to her questions only later, after the reader (*CL*, L. 113, pp. 435-38). Past and present intermingle closely instead of being two separate time-zones, and there is a thick

web of causality which takes the narrative away from the episodic style of *Moll Flanders* where events succeed one another in time and in space without any complex associations. Richardson has, in fact, 'created layers of events, not within a strict interconnection, but embedded in a hidden past in which motivations and reactions will never be fully clarified'.¹² The fact that both the first and the last letter of the book should be written by secondary characters, and not the two heroes, is striking. The first letter by Anna implies that things in the Harlowe family have gone out of hand and that Clarissa needs to clarify the situation amongst her friends. The last letter cannot be written by Lovelace since the duel has got out of hand – contrary to his expectations – and he is dead. The beginning and the end of the book seem to indicate that, despite their efforts to change circumstances, neither Clarissa nor Lovelace can control their destinies.

The end Richardson chose for his story was much criticised by his contemporaries – especially women – who wanted an 'earthly' happy-ending, not a tragic heavenly reward for the beautiful and virtuous Clarissa. As is explained in the Postscript,

the author of the foregoing work has been favoured, in the course of its publication, with many anonymous letters, in which the writers have *differently* expressed their wishes as to what they apprehended of the catastrophe.

Most of those directed to him by the gentler sex turn in favour of what they call a *fortunate ending*; and some of them, enamoured as they declare with the principal character, are warmly solicitous to have her *happy*. (*CL*, p. 1495)

Richardson explains that, not only were the tragic consequences included in the plan from the beginning, but that the narrative was inexorably moving towards the rewards and punishments of which we are given a detailed list in the Conclusion (*CL*, pp. 1489-94). Moreover, the religious message in the novel could not allow any other reward for the

¹² Frederick Karl, *A Reader's Guide to the Development of the English Novel in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1975), p. 332.

heroine but that of heavenly beatitude, since it is a work 'designed to inculcate upon the human mind, under the guise of an amusement, the great lessons of Christianity' (*CL*, p. 1495). Anna already expresses this view at the beginning of the novel in one of her letters to Clarissa:

The result is this: that I am fitter for *this* world than you, you for the *next* than me — that's the difference. But long, long, for my sake, and for hundreds of sakes, may it be before you quit us for company more congenial and more worthy of you! (*CL*, L. 10, p. 69)

The author also justifies his choice according to the rules of tragedy and blames modern criticism for wishing an '*equal distribution of rewards and punishments* and an impartial execution of *poetical justice*', whereas

good and evil happen alike to ALL MEN on this side the grave: and as the principal design of tragedy is to raise commiseration and terror in the minds of the audience, we shall defeat this great end if we always make virtue and innocence happy and successful. (*CL*, PostScript, p. 1496)

Other elements could not allow *Clarissa's* ending to be different from what it is, and in particular the characteristics – or flaws – Richardson gives to his protagonists. Firstly, the mixture of meekness and of rational pride in Clarissa makes her from the very beginning procrastinate any practical action that could free her from the yoke of her family. From the moment her family starts to menace her to marry Solmes, Clarissa tries to delay any action with the hope that things can only revert to the happiness she knew and deserves: 'So here is one week gained!' (*CL*, L. 63, p. 268). Even when Lovelace tries to make her escape, and her marriage with Solmes is imminent, what she has in mind is to gain time: 'I shall gain time at least — I am sure I shall — I have several ways to gain time' (*CL*, L. 94, p. 375). She excels in verbal jousts, spoken or written, with which she thinks she can win everybody over to her side – even a rake. John Harlowe warns his niece about the consequences of her skilful use of language on her family: 'since you have displayed your talents and spared nobody, and moved everybody without being moved, you have but made us stand the

closer and firmer together' (*CL*, L. 60.1, p. 253). Clarissa and Anna Howe believe at the beginning that it is possible for Clarissa to redeem Lovelace. Anna writes to Clarissa: 'if there be a woman in the world that can reclaim him, it is you' (*CL*, L. 48, p. 214). Yet, already, after Lovelace has managed to convince Clarissa to fly away with him, she is angry at herself for having believed that her will would be stronger than the weakness her family acknowledges in her: 'he had as great a confidence in my weakness, as I had in my own strength [...] he has triumphed [...] for he has not been mistaken in me, while I have in myself!' (*CL*, L. 94, pp. 381-82). Finally, Clarissa repents from this pride in her posthumous letter to Lovelace: 'For I was weak enough, and presumptuous enough, to hope to be a means in the hand of Providence to reclaim a man whom I thought worthy of the attempt' (*CL*, L. 510.4, p. 1427). Clarissa's powerful language extends well beyond her death through her posthumous letters, so much so that Lovelace inquires from Belford whether her family is as affected as he is by what he calls 'the barbed dart of after-reflection' (*CL*, L. 511, p. 1429). In an ironic twist, John writes another letter to Clarissa towards the end of her life, which arrives too late for her to read. This time, the tone has changed, and her power as a writer is praised rather than criticised: 'we know your talents, my dear, and how movingly you could write, whenever you pleased; so that nobody could ever deny you anything' (*CL*, L. 485, p. 1366). The religious overtones of Richardson's story seem to imply that Clarissa's strong belief in the powers of her mind are a flaw in one who should rely on faith and trust in God only. Secondly, as Clarissa's family is immovable, no happy option is left to her but to choose 'a lesser evil in hope to prevent a greater', that is, to escape with Lovelace so as not to marry Solmes (*CL*, L. 81, p. 332). However, this is no escape, for Lovelace is portrayed as a devil. Anna writes to Clarissa, early on in the story: 'the man, my dear, is a devil' (*CL*, L. 68, p. 278); and, later, 'but he is the devil, by his own account' (*CL*, L. 119, p. 451). She also writes to Belford, after

Clarissa's death: 'for then, sir, he was not known to be Beelzebub himself' (*CL*, L. 523, p. 1456). Lovelace enjoys a challenge, for playfulness's sake, or what he calls 'warfare' between him and Clarissa:

I will see how *her* will works; and how *my* will leads me on. I will give the combatants fair play. And I find, every time I attend her, that she is less in *my* power — I more than *hers*. (*CL*, L. 99, pp. 401, 402)

Lovelace is a man who has never been able to recognise the value of a woman, as he acknowledges himself in his last but one letter to Belford, because of the 'mean opinion of the sex which [he] had imbibed from early manhood' (*CL*, L535.2, p. 1481). In addition, after the shock of the news of Clarissa's death and the posthumous letter he receives from her, he seems to revert to his own self, not to be able to repent:

Every hour my constitution rises stronger and stronger to befriend me; and, except a tributary sigh now and then to the memory of my heart's beloved, it gives me hope that I shall quickly be what I was — life, spirit, gaiety, and once more the plague of a sex that has been my plague, and will be every man's plague, at one time or other of his life. (*CL*, L. 512, p. 1432)

He sees Clarissa as a woman of flesh and blood who let herself die and cannot return (*CL*, L. 512, p. 1431). He tries to justify the rape by calling it a theft of which no one has ever been known to die (*CL*, L. 515, pp. 1438-39). Although he hints at a possible attempt at following Belford's example of a reformed life, much is said in jest (*CL*, L. 513, p. 1432). Nevertheless, Lovelace, like Clarissa, is an ambiguous character. In his last but one letter to Belford, after having organised meeting Morden in a duel, he gives the impression that he is struck with remorse, and his cursing seems to reinforce the authenticity of his feelings:

If I find myself thus miserable abroad, I will soon return to England and follow your example, I think — turn hermit, or some plaguy thing or other, and see what a constant course of penitence and mortification will do for me. There is no living at this rate — d-n me if there be! (*CL*, L. 535, p. 1483)

Thirdly, there is a fear mixed with pleasure in playing with fire in almost all the characters – Lovelace being the archetypal player.¹³ From the very beginning of Clarissa's correspondence with Anna, the reader perceives that the two women are greatly devoted to each other but are quick to correct each other and to spot the other's faults:

Neither you nor I, my dear [Anna], although you now assume the air of a diviner (pardon me), could have believed that would have happened what has happened. (*CL*, L. 19, p. 104)

I must chide you [Anna], once more, for the severe, the very severe things, you mention of our family [...]. Indeed, my dear I wonder at you! (*CL*, L. 59, p. 249) [...]. sometimes [Clarissa] you are a little too grave, methinks; I, no doubt, a little too flippant in your opinion. [...] each in the other's eye having something amiss, and each loving the other well enough to bear being told of it. (*CL*, L. 27, p. 131)

The love between the two young women is sincere, but asymmetric, as Clarissa's influence and personality are greater than Anna's. Thus, Anna confesses to Clarissa: 'I was always more afraid of you than of my mama', and, commenting upon Clarissa's treatment of Lovelace before the elopement she states: 'you really strike people in awe' (*CL*, L. 111, p. 432). Anna volunteers to be a witness to Clarissa's and Lovelace's relationship, as 'a standerby may see more of the game than one that plays' (*CL*, L. 100, p. 407). Thus, in the first part of the novel, Anna refers to the situation between Clarissa and Lovelace as a game or a play, and she writes to Clarissa: 'you have a very nice part to act' (*CL*, L. 111, p. 432). After spending a little time with Clarissa, Lovelace is thrilled when he realises that the game, or rather, the warfare, goes both ways. Clarissa is capable of opposing him, of resisting his charms, and even of making him look like an 'abject slave' (*CL*, L. 108, p. 424). He exclaims: 'is she not a match for me? More than a match? Does she not outdo me at every fair weapon?' (*CL*, L. 109, p. 425). Clarissa faces several challenges. What leads

¹³ See the analysis of the relationship between Lovelace and Clarissa in John Traugott, 'Clarissa's Richardson: An Essay to find the Reader', in *English Literature in the Age of Disguise*, ed. by Maximilian E. Novak (London, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), pp. 157-208 (pp. 176-208).

her to write the letter which puts her in Lovelace's power is a conversation she overhears between her brother and sister which proves to what point they take pleasure in hunting their sister:

This works charmingly, my dear sister! / It does! It does! said she, in an exulting accent. / Let us keep it up, said my brother — The villain is caught in his own trap! — Now she must be what we'd have her be. / Do you keep my father to it; I'll take care of my mamma, said Bella. / Never fear, said he! — and a laugh of congratulation to each other, and derision of me [...] quite turned my frenzical humour into a vindictive one. (*CL*, L. 83, p. 340)

Solmes also seems to enjoy seeing Clarissa suffer. She reports: 'the cruel creature took pleasure in seeing me; although so much to my disgust — and so wanted to see me again. Must he not be a savage, my dear?' (*CL*, L. 79, p. 324).

Although Richardson was determined on the death of Clarissa, and this despite the pleading letters he received from female readers, Clarissa was open to slight changes. The author's avowal of advice for the subsequent volumes suggests a space for manoeuvre: 'it was resolved to present the world the two first volumes by way of specimen, and to be determined with regard to the rest by the reception those should meet with' (*CL*, The Preface, p. 36). Moreover, after the first complete publication (1747-48), Richardson printed a second (1749), a third (1751), and a fourth edition of *Clarissa* (1759), the second and the third editions bringing a considerable number of modifications to the work:

The first four volumes of [C2] contain several thousand small, but cumulatively important, modifications of the text, and to these are added in [C3] several larger alterations, mostly additions. [...] In all, [C3] is 200 pages longer than [C1]. (*CL*, Introduction, p. 16)

These changes illustrate that Richardson had in mind the fuller comprehension without misunderstanding of his work. He wanted to please his contemporaries as far as it did not undermine the artistic purpose of his work and the plan he had in mind. Thus, one finds:

twenty-two omniscient footnotes by the 'editor' [were] added to [C2] and retained in [C3]; eighteen of these also set out to blacken Lovelace or (another reaction of Richardson to criticism) raise Clarissa. [...] A related class of

alteration is to be found in [C2] in the increased use of italics to nudge the reader's attention to significant words, phrases and longer passages, another development in directly forcing the reader's response [...]. (*CL*, Introduction, p. 17)

The footnotes also often send the reader to letters relevant to the one being read so as to give a better view of the whole work and of its connections.

Although Fielding's text devotes more pages to a day than Richardson's, in *Tom Jones*, there is not so much tension. What is emphasised is movement, the fact that one adventure succeeds another in time and in space and eventually leads to reconciliation. One stays on the outside, the descriptions are numerous but they are of actions, not of introspection. From the beginning, Tom's misadventures are part of the comic scheme which leads to his full recognition as a real and truly deserving member of Allworthy's family. Frederick Karl rightly contrasts Fielding's realism with Richardson's: 'We can speak of Fielding's theory of comedy as a way of defining his own brand of "external" realism, "external" in its lack of psychological detail, its narrative openness, its spatiality of plot, all of which must be contrasted with Richardson's internalizing of effects' (Karl, p. 158). Comedy allows the reader to laugh at events from the outside, not to feel them from the inside as in *Clarissa*. Karl defines letters as being 'clearly an insistent expression of individuality, and their repeated use in fiction is a movement toward sentimentality and romanticism, away from classical rules and external order, toward an internalism based on the individual psyche' (Karl, p. 107). In *Clarissa*, each moment is critical, and, from the beginning to the end, the crises are constant, as the smallest changes in mood and in daily routine are recorded. With Richardson, the actual action is limited to a few major events, such as the confinement of the heroine in her bedroom, Solmes's visits, her escape with Lovelace, then from him, before and after the rape, her preparation for death, the settlement of her will, and it ends with the duel where Lovelace is killed. One is taken in by a multitude of details and

attitudes, a technique Richardson adopted, for, 'in the minutia lie often the unfoldings of the Story, as well as of the heart'.¹⁴ The extraordinary, the 'X' moments, increase exponentially as psychological life, with its psychological time and intimate space, is given the front of the scene. There is a stark contrast in narrative speed between *Moll Flanders* and *Clarissa*.¹⁵ Defoe tells the story of most of Moll's life and yet the book is only about a fifth of the length of *Clarissa*, which covers events over the span of a single year. As Samuel Macey reminds us, 'Defoe spends an average of five pages on a year and Richardson spends an average of six pages on a day'.¹⁶ This is the pace, for instance, in the first two volumes during *Clarissa's* confinement in her bedroom at Harlowe Place. Her confinement starts after her return from Anna's home in her letter dated 20 February (*CL*, L. 7, p. 58). It ends in her escape with Lovelace on 10 April (as told in *CL*, L. 92, p. 370). About six weeks or fifty days of story time take up more than three hundred pages in my edition. Thus, the reader experiences uneasiness at the combination of inertia and intensity in *Clarissa*. The great length of the book, together with the slow pace of the narrative and the attention to detail, allow sufficient time for the reader to immerse himself in the temporality of the novel, to be somehow swallowed by these lives which offer a surrogate way of living. Finally, the pace of the narrative appears so close to the pace of real life that one feels the text is never going to stop:

¹⁴ Richardson to Lady Bradshaigh, 14 February 1754, in *Selected Letters of Samuel Richardson*, ed. by John Carroll (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), p. 289, quoted in Simon Varey, *Space and the Eighteenth-Century English Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990), p. 184.

¹⁵ When talking of narrative speed, I use Genette's concept of 'vitesse', which is defined by the relationship between the duration of the story and the length of the text: 'on entend par vitesse le rapport entre une mesure temporelle et une mesure spatiale', 'la vitesse du récit se définira par le rapport entre une durée, celle de l'histoire, mesurée en secondes, minutes, heures, jours, mois et années, et une longueur: celle du texte, mesurée en lignes et en pages' (*Figure III*, p. 123).

¹⁶ Samuel Macey, 'Clock and Chronology in the Novels from Defoe to Austen', *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 7:2 (1982), 96-104 (p.101).

In one respect the effect of these novels is rather like that of certain popular long-running radio serials, which move perpetually through alternating crises and resolutions without ever reaching a definite end. The comparison is of course a limited one, for Richardson's novels, unlike modern serials, did aspire to a conclusion.¹⁷

However, Ian Donaldson explains that, in *Pamela*, two 'post-marriage' volumes were added which were not intended originally. Due to its great popularity, the story went on with 'no end, no aim in view', 'tediously chronicling the minor delights and strains of matrimonial life', which Richardson was careful to avoid in *Clarissa* (Donaldson, p. 33). *Clarissa* tends to its end, an end Richardson had in mind from the beginning and would not change for all the contradictory advice he received. One is aware that the flow of small events slowly and tragically pushes the protagonists towards their destiny, so that the novel moves towards completion. Yet, the narrative has a strong power of absorption of time and of internalisation of space. It holds the reader's attention to the present moment, with the hope, the uncertainties, and the anxiety each situation brings to the inner life of the characters. The different natures of chronotopes between *Clarissa* on the one hand, and *Moll Flanders* and *Tom Jones* where the succession of actions is predominant on the other hand, explain why Richardson's selectiveness of what should be included in the narrative is on a different scale.

Humphry Clinker offers a more outward looking progression in space, a more straightforward sequence of events, and a temporality which is far less complex than that of *Clarissa*. Yet, Smollett's epistolary novel only has the appearance of a cyclical story. The book begins with the characters having started on a journey in order to look for better health for Matthew Bramble, and to experience life through different customs for his

¹⁷ Ian Donaldson, 'Fielding, Richardson, and the Ends of the Novel', *Essays in Criticism: A Quarterly Journal of Literary Criticism*, 32:1 (1982), 26-47 (p. 28).

nephew and niece. It ends with some of the family on their way back to Brambleton Hall having achieved what they set out for: Matthew Bramble has gathered a 'considerable stock of health', the family is enlarged through three weddings, and their relationships are more harmonious.¹⁸ Jery changes his attitude towards his uncle in the course of the journey. Early on he explains: 'the truth is, his disposition and mine, which, like oil and vinegar, repelled one another at first, have now begun to mix by dint of being beat up together' (*HC*, p. 17). Then he claims: 'Mr. Bramble's character [...] opens and improves upon me every day' (*HC*, p. 28). Towards the end of their journey, Jery and Matthew make very positive comments indeed, such as: 'Our society is really enchanting' (*HC*, p. 333); and: '— I really believe it would not be an easy task to find such a number of individuals assembled under one roof, more happy than we are at present' (*HC*, p. 343). Jery acknowledges the usefulness of travelling in order to be a better person: 'Without all doubt, the greatest advantage acquired in travelling and perusing mankind in the original, is that of dispelling those shameful clouds that darken the faculties of the mind, preventing it from judging with candour and precision' (*HC*, p. 332). The characters put up with one another in a more understanding way, and the reader feels that they do have tender feelings and concern for one-another even if they appeared cold and distant on the surface. For instance, Jery comments on the relationship between his uncle and his aunt in one of his letters:

'This precious aunt of yours is become insensibly a part of my constitution — Damn her! She's a *noli me tangere* in my flesh, which I cannot bear to be touched or tampered with.' [...] He really has an affection for this original [...]. Nay, I am convinced, that she has likewise a most virulent attachment to his person; though her love never shews itself but in the shape of discontent; and she persists in tormenting him out of sheer tenderness. (*HC*, pp. 61-62)

¹⁸ Tobias Smollett, *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker*, ed. by Lewis M. Knapp, revised by Paul Gabriel Boucé (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 351. All further quotations from this edition of *Humphry Clinker* will be referred to in the main text as *HC*.

Yet the reader only gets a partial sense of completion and very little satisfaction at the 'all's well that ends well'. The love which ties Lydia and her beloved is romantic and loyal. Jery comments on the fact that 'George Dennison and his wife are too delicate to exhibit any strong-marked signs of their mutual satisfaction, but their eyes are sufficiently expressive' (*HC*, p. 349). However, the other two marriages may appear to the reader to be convenient arrangements rather than happy and harmonious resolutions. Tabitha is shown husband-hunting, and anybody seems to be a potentially good enough match to fulfil her need for matrimony. Her brother abruptly remarks that 'she attached herself to Lismahago for no other reason but that she despaired of making a more agreeable conquest' (*HC*, p. 343). Both Winifred and Tabitha show signs that their hearts are not totally devoted to their husbands-to-be. Matthew Bramble says about his sister: 'At present, if I am not much mistaken in my observation, she would gladly convert the widowhood of Baynard to her own advantage' (*ibid.*); and Winifred writes herself to her friend Mary Jones at about the same period of time in the story:

Mr. Clinker [...] had better look to his tackle — There be other chaps in the market, as the saying is — What would he say if I should except the soot and sarvice of the young 'squire's valley. (*HC*, p. 338)

Jery might not be the best judge of the possible happiness of the newly married couples. For him, marriage is to be 'sacrificed to Hymen', 'caged for life' (*HC*, p. 348), and it is a 'decoy' (*HC*, p. 349). Yet, the reader can appreciate the bitter feelings he has about relationships, and still find some truth in his observations because the couple's attitudes are in line with their previous behaviour and temperament:

If one may judge from the *looks* of the parties, they are all very well *satisfied* with what has passed [...]. — Mrs. Tabitha Lismahago is rather *fulsome* in signifying her approbation of the captain's love; while his deportment is the very pink of gallantry. — He sighs, and ogles, and languishes at this amiable object; he kisses her hand, mutters ejaculations of *rapture*, and sings tender airs; and, no doubt, *laughs internally at her folly in believing him sincere*. [...] — Mr. Matthew Loyd, when asked how he relished his *bargain*, throws up his

eyes, crying, '*For what we have received, Lord make us thankful: amen.*' (HC, p. 349, my italics)

The words Smollett selects for Jerry's statement awaken the reader's awareness to the opposition between what is shown on the surface with the verb 'look', and what the characters really feel for each other. From the contrast arise irony and doubt. Other devices reinforce this feeling. The words 'satisfied', 'bargain', and Humphry's blessing which is usually used before a meal to thank God for the food (only the tense has been slightly altered: 'we are about to receive'), make one think of merchandise. The exaggeration of the two couples' behaviour is contrasted with the modesty and the delicacy of the true lovers, Lydia and Wilson. The words 'fulsome' and 'rapture' referring to Tabitha, and the description further down the page of the lanky Lismahago dancing a 'Highland saraband over a naked back-sword' and leaping so high that 'he would make no contemptible figure as a vaulter at Sadler's Wells', make the two characters appear like second class laughable actors for the popular theatres of the time (HC, p. 349). There are other passages in which the use of exaggeration ridicules the two couples, such as Matthew Bramble's previsions on the future progeny of his natural son, which he refers to as 'a whole litter' (HC, p. 345). The animal imagery is also used when referring to his sister and her husband, whom he wishes to be 'as happily paired as any two draught animals in the kingdom' (HC, p. 339).

A book which finishes with marriage contains in itself a new beginning, usually with the happy prospect one finds in fairy tales of living happily ever after. This is what the reader experiences in *Tom Jones*. The 'beyond the book' in Smollett's novel is more uncertain and ambiguous, and it contains seeds of future difficulties. The situation of the characters has changed for the better yet, although the plot has rounded them off into marriage and better health, there is no sense of an idyllic situation. Jerry issues a warning:

— Thus all these widgeons enjoy the novelty of their situation; but, perhaps their notes will be changed, when they are better acquainted with the nature of the decoy. (*HC*, p. 349)

The implication at the end of *Humphry Clinker* is that the experiences and the better knowledge and tolerance of the other gained during the journey allow the characters to adapt more easily to new situations and to feel more content with their own nature and fate, rather than to attain a perfect state of happiness. Jean Viviès comments on the status of the denouement:

Le monde est malade, on ne peut le guérir en totalité mais s'en accommoder tel qu'il est, trouver un point d'équilibre entre l'individu et le monde, qui n'est ni la fusion ni l'antinomie: les polarités – ville et campagne, misanthropie et bienveillance – voient plutôt leurs limites estompées. Le texte met en évidence une mise au repos du mouvement plus qu'une résolution, il se lit comme un enregistrement de ce qu'il y a d'"irréconcilié" dans le monde.¹⁹

Moreover, although the book bears Humphry's name, he is not one of the letter-writers and his change of status – although by right of birth – is not much emphasised. No special inheritance is mentioned and he is to continue serving his newly acquired father 'in superintending the œconomy of [his] farm' (*HC*, p. 350). The closing letter of the book is written by Winifred, previously Tabitha's maid and now Clinker/Loyd's wife after having – in her own terms – been 'chined, by the grease of God, in the holy bands of mattermoney' (*HC*, p. 352). The main impression one gets from reading the last letter is that of comedy because of the 'picklearities' in the maid's language when she describes the three wedded couples (*ibid.*). One also becomes aware that marriage does not change the nature of the servant. Her main interests remain in appearances and money. Thus, her tale of the weddings consists only of a detailed list of what people were wearing, and she describes her husband as a good bargain: 'thof [Mr Loyd] don't enter in caparison with great folks of

¹⁹ Jean Viviès, 'Savoir-faire ancien ou savoir-faire nouveau? Le Dénouement de *Humphry Clinker*', *Bulletin de la société d'études anglo-américaines des XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles*, 41 (1995), 123-33 (p. 130).

quality, [...] his pursing is far from contentible' (ibid.). What is holy for her is 'matter' and 'money', not matrimony. After the wedding, her sense of self-importance or 'vanity', as Lydia defines it earlier in the journey, is boosted (*HC*, p. 259). Winifred expresses the wish to be estranged and respected by those who were her old friends, and must now be only servants to her. She warns them: 'you'll behave respectful, and keep a proper distance' (*HC*, p. 353). These words, apart from the formal letter ending, are the last words of the novel, and they do not give the reader a sense of the victory of positive moral values, as the endings of *Tom Jones* and *Clarissa* do. In *Humphry Clinker*, the story follows the linear pattern of the journey through Great Britain and the reader is aware of a sequential progression in the characters' experience of life until the weddings and the planned return to Brambleton Hall. Yet, the sense of realism and freedom of behaviour of the characters is not lost, so that Smollett cannot be accused, like 'the modern Authors of Comedy' of sacrificing characterisation to the plot with a convenient ending (*TJ*, VIII 1, p. 406). The fate of his characters takes a new turn, but they keep their basic personality. The major consequence of this is the feeling of absence of resolution or uneasiness the reader experiences when closing the book. The end is not 'satisfactory' mainly because the book gives the *impression* of completing a cycle without providing the sense of fullness or perfection one would expect from completion. It is tempting to agree with Robert Hopkins that 'there is no real resolution in *Humphry Clinker*. The happy ending is a surface one, ironical and deliberately so'.²⁰

When one reaches the end of *Moll Flanders*, *Tom Jones*, or *Clarissa*, one comes across a definite ending. The reader may chose to re-consider and study the threads which led to

²⁰ Robert Hopkins, 'The Function of Grotesque in *Humphry Clinker*', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 32 (1969), 163-77 (p. 177).

this ending, but the conclusion of the plot stays the same. The ending in *Humphry Clinker* is not as clear-cut, but it is presented as a positive conclusion for the characters themselves. The travellers are coming to the end of their journey, they have achieved a better understanding of the customs of the places visited and of one another, three couples are happy to be married according to their own wishes, and Matthew's health has greatly improved. In *Tristram Shandy* and in *A Sentimental Journey* nothing is concluded, there are elements and events which are developed, but they do not tend to a denouement.

A Sentimental Journey starts with a puzzling statement: '— They order, said I, this matter better in France —' (*ASJ*, p. 65). This is an 'étique' beginning; the sentence is grammatically correct and complete but Sterne chooses to introduce first in his narrative the personal pronoun 'They', which does not refer to any antecedent.²¹ The reader feels that the first sentence of the book is in fact part of a longer conversation, which beginning has not been reported by the narrator. This feeling is reinforced by the use of the demonstrative adjective 'this' attached to the noun 'matter' which refers to something previously discussed and which Yorick will never explicitly clarify. Yet, the 'matter' is of crucial importance, as it is what decides Yorick to set off for France immediately in time of war and without a passport, as if wanting to leave his nationality or identity behind. The beginning of *A Sentimental Journey* makes one think of the outset of a mysterious quest for knowledge, a knowledge which requires leaving one's home and familiar surrounding without any second thought, and travelling light – without any pre-conceived ideas – as Yorick does:

²¹ Gérard Genette, *Nouveau Discours du Récit* (Paris: Seuil, 1983), p. 47. When dealing with 'début étiques', Genette refers to J. M. Backus's terminology, which he translates as 'référentiels sans référence, anaphoriques sans antécédents, mais dont la fonction est précisément de simuler, et par là de constituer une référence, et de l'imposer au lecteur par voie de présupposition' (ibid.).

— I went straight back to my lodgings, put up half a dozen shirts and a black pair of silk breeches — ‘the coat I have on [...] will do’. (*ASJ*, p. 65)

The reader is present at the very start of Yorick’s adventures in France, yet he is not given the reason for the journey. By keeping the suspense, the thirst for knowledge is shared by the reader too. He has to find alongside the narrator what there is to be learnt on such a journey, and what exactly Yorick is after, if he wants to know what the ‘matter’ is. *Clarissa*’s beginning *in medias res* carries past events and, with them, a complex web of causality with a great need for clarification, which is mostly satisfied as the story progresses by lengthy and detailed letters. In that respect, *Clarissa*’s beginning is very different from the beginning *in medias res* of *A Sentimental Journey*. In *A Sentimental Journey*, although the story starts in the middle of a conversation, the reader is never told the context of the conversation which triggered Yorick’s journey, one is never brought into the past of the protagonist before he set off for France. Unlike *Clarissa*’s beginning which already contains all the seeds for the development of the story, that of *A Sentimental Journey* is a fresh start. It is the outset of a new experience for a character who does not wish to be hampered by his origins and his past experience. There is no looking back, as there is a definite movement forward where the protagonist concentrates on each brief experience and the sensations it creates as he travels towards Italy.

The preface appears to be misplaced: it is not at the beginning of the book, instead, it is included in it (*ASJ*, pp. 78-85). It is not an authorial introduction but it belongs to the body of the text. This position gives the preface a special status; it gives it as much importance as the body of the work. The preface also acts as a preface as it offers a definition of sentimental travelling together with a warning about the difficulties and the possibility of failure in embarking on such an uncommon journey. It does not tell of the start of the journey to France but it introduces a sentimental attitude and a will to leave the isolation of

the *Desobligeant* in order to open up to the world around him.²² The tradition of long and verbose beginnings was changing with the novelists of the eighteenth century. In *Tom Jones*, Fielding writes a dedication at the end of which he must apologise for having written an introduction instead (*TJ*, Dedication, p. 8). He thus mixes the two in a concise style. Richardson's preface to *Clarissa* is short and describes what he regards as the main characteristics of the book and comments upon its length (*CL*, pp. 35–36). He also defines the style in which the letters are written (*CL*, p. 35). In *Tristram Shandy*, the preface can be found in volume three, chapter twenty. There, the narrator clearly states that, in writing his book, he has 'appealed to the world, — and to the world [he] leave[s] it; — it must speak for itself' (*TS*, p. 227). The preface consists of a sort of treatise on the contemporary concern for the faculties of wit and judgement. The new genre was being defined – and already parodied by Sterne – and the shape was adapting to its needs, even at the margin of discourse. Cervantes and Swift, who greatly inspired Sterne's wit, narrative style, and characterisation, also denounced unnecessary bulky beginnings to fictional works. In Cervantes's *Don Quixote* (part 1, 1605; part 2, 1615), the narrator writes in the preface:

I had a great Mind to have expos'd it [his book] as naked as it was born, without the Addition of a Preface, of the numberless Trumpery of commendatory Sonnets, Epigrams, and other Poems that usually usher in the Conceptions of Authors [...].²³

He also adds that he would be glad to do without the usual bulk of quotations from Greek and Latin authors throughout the story. As a solution to his problems, he prints, in place of a preface, a conversation he had with a friend. This friend advises him to make up his own learned quotations – or to take a book which contains an alphabetical list of them to copy as

²² See the analysis of the preface in Jean Viviès, 'A Sentimental Journey, or Reading Rewarded', *Bulletin de la société d'études anglo-américaines des XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles*, 38 (1994), 243–53 (p. 245).

²³ Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, Ozell's Revision of the translation by Peter Motteux (New York: The Modern Library, 1930), p. xx.

it is in his book – and to concentrate on writing a story that is honest, clear and entertaining without worrying about the ornaments. In Swift's 1704 satire, *A Tale of a Tub*, the narrator also mocks the conventions which were used at the time to begin literary works:

it is lamentable to behold with what a lazy Scorn many of the yawning Readers in our Age do now a-days twirl over forty or fifty Pages of *Preface* and *Dedication* [...] as if there were so much *Latin*. Tho' it must be also allowed on the other Hand that a very considerable Number is known to proceed *Criticks* and *Wits* by reading nothing else.²⁴

The preface is about half way through the book. It consists, the narrator says, in 'expatiat[ing] upon the Beauty of [his] own Productions, and display[ing] the bright Parts of [his] Discourse' (*Tale*, p. 132). He justifies this position by adding that he would rather make 'a very considerable Addition to the Bulk of the Volume' instead of doing so at the margin of the text as many authors are in the habit of doing (*ibid.*). The irony is all the more felt by the reader in that, in order to start reading *A Tale of a Tub*, he has had to read through a front page, a list of Treatises written 'by the same Author', a long apology, a postscript, a dedication, a word from the bookseller to the reader, another dedication, and a preface, in order to come to Section One, which is itself an introduction. The whole of the prefatory material thus makes up a third of the length of the *Tale*. However, the satire also extends to the introductory material. Moreover, as the book's main interest does not lie solely in the story of the two brothers, but is interspersed with digressive chapters on the art of writing, on satire, critics, digressions, madness, and readers, amongst other topics, the introductory material is not an appendix, but belongs wholly to the work.

In *A Sentimental Journey*, the beginning *in medias res* is echoed by the comically suggestive ending which describes Yorick catching 'hold of the fille de chambre's / END

²⁴ Jonathan Swift, *A Tale of a Tub & C.*, ed. by A. C. Guthkelch and D. Nichol Smith (Oxford: Oxford Clarendon Press, 1920, 2nd edn, 1958), p. 131. All further quotations from this edition of *A Tale of a Tub* will be referred to in the main text as *Tale*.

OF VOL. II.' (*ASJ*, p. 291). The sentence is suspended in a never-ending aposiopesis. One may notice that religion and sexual desire are comically linked, since 'Nature and patience both wearing out' after having been lying in bed restless for a few hours in the same room as the 'Piedmontese' and her 'Fille de Chambre', Yorick lets out no other exclamation than a 'O my God!', thus breaking the treaty of silence they had established (*ASJ*, p. 290). When trying to justify his infraction of the treaty, Yorick claims that it was 'no more than an ejaculation', 'provided for in the clause of the third article' of the treaty which allowed him to say his prayers. Yorick's suggestive choice of words clashes with his claims of innocence and his pretence that, in bed near two women, he cannot pinpoint the cause of his unrest: 'whether it was the novelty of the situation, or what it was, I know not' (*ibid.*). Elizabeth Kraft comments upon Yorick's 'ejaculation' and concludes, somehow without accounting for the irony in the passage: 'he speaks these words from erotic pleasure as much as from spiritual need, as much from the body as from the soul. For in this life, Sterne maintains, it is impossible to say just where one begins and the other ends'.²⁵ The inseparability of body and soul and the complexity of human nature are themes which run through *A Sentimental Journey*, as well as through *Tristram Shandy*.²⁶ At least two of Yorick's statements reinforce this view: 'there is nothing unmixt in this world' (*ASJ*, p. 228); and: 'If nature has so wove her web of kindness, that some threads of love and desire are entangled with the piece — must the whole web be rent in drawing them out?' (*ASJ*, p. 237). The ending could then be seen as a questioning of Yorick's search, as the victory of bawdy over delicate sentiments. Alternatively, one can perceive a further mockery of

²⁵ Elizabeth Kraft, 'The Pentecostal Moment in *A Sentimental Journey*', in *Critical Essays on Laurence Sterne*, ed. by Melvyn New (New York: G.K. Hall, London: Prentice Hall, 1998), pp. 292-310 (p. 308).

²⁶ See Gisèle Gourdon, 'Confinements and Flights of the Characters in *Tristram Shandy*', *The Shandean: An Annual Devoted to Laurence Sterne and His Works*, 10 (1998), 92-106.

theories which separate the body from the soul. On the one hand, an idealistic sentimentalism and religious strictures which do not recognise the impure and contradictory nature of men. And, on the other hand, a mechanical theory of the body, a simple combination of 'matter and motion', which is a vision of man Yorick strongly rejects when he insists that he has a soul in the episode with Maria (*ASJ*, p. 271). It is a puzzling final passage, which comically teases the reader's imagination and reverses the roles, as it hands over the ambiguity of the situation, the guilt, and the final moral judgement to the reader. This is an important technique in *A Sentimental Journey*, which Yorick makes explicit in his earlier address to the reader about how the lady and himself would undress in all privacy: 'there was but one way of doing it, and that I leave to the reader to devise; protesting as I do it, that if it is not the most delicate in nature, 'tis the fault of his own imagination – against which this is not my first complaint' (*ASJ*, p. 290). Yorick's interrupted sentence, despite its jesting tone, is not as reassuring as a well-rounded ending. Somehow, it sends the reader back to his own fears of death, since life is usually cut off from us as suddenly and surprisingly as this book ends, without letting us put order in our affairs or finish a sentence properly. This feeling is reinforced by the fact that Yorick's last action is an 'accident', brought out by circumstances. He did not plan that the 'fille de chambre', hearing some noise, would get up and put herself within reach of his hand (*ASJ*, p. 291). On a larger scale, though, the reader can tell that the adventures in France are running to an end since Yorick has started his journey towards Italy. One can wonder whether, if Sterne had lived to write the second part of the journey through Italy, the ending of the second volume would have been more rounded. This is a matter for speculation. But one needs to keep in mind that the whole structure and the style of the first part point to a journey which is fragmented. Its progression greatly depends on circumstances. The narrative is often

interrupted and contains digressions. Moreover, it is devoted to the description of fleeting moments.

The flow of the narrative is constantly stopped by numerous very brief chapters which constitute short reading stages or vignettes. In each vignette a new episode develops, or a new stage within an episode. Thus, the reader cannot sit back and relax while skipping through the extensive text of a book consisting of long chapters, such as *Tom Jones*, or of a continuous chapterless text such as *Moll Flanders*. Instead, at each stage, he must apply himself afresh to the attentive study of Sterne's complex narrative. Each vignette has a title. Thomas Keymer sees *Tristram Shandy* as a 'direct response to *Tom Jones*'s model of novel-reading as "Conversation" in a stage-coach', although he admits that 'some of the evidence is inconclusive'.²⁷ Although this link between the two books is plausible considering Sterne's parodying spirit, it is difficult to agree with Keymer when he states that '*A Sentimental Journey* is punctuated by chapter titles recalling the stages of a quite literal journey by coach'. It is sufficient to look at the first few chapter headings in the book to be convinced that if they represented the stages of a 'literal journey by coach', it would be a very static and repetitive journey indeed: 'Calais', 'The Monk. Calais', 'The Monk. Calais', 'The Monk. Calais', 'The Desobligeant. Calais', 'Preface In the Desobligeant', 'Calais', 'In the Street. Calais', 'The Remise Door. Calais', 'The Remise Door. Calais', 'The Snuff-Box. Calais', 'The Remise Door. Calais', and 'In the Street. Calais'. There is a variation amongst the titles since some refer to episodes which the reader can picture just by seeing the heading of the chapter, such as, for example: 'The Gloves. Paris', 'The Translation. Paris', 'The Dwarf. Paris', 'The Captive. Paris'. Nonetheless, the chapter

²⁷ Thomas Keymer, 'Readers and Stage-Coaches in Fielding and Sterne', *Notes and Queries*, 41:239: 2 (1994), 209-11 (p. 210).

headings are an unreliable technique for guiding the steps of the reader through the fragmented narrative of Yorick's journey. There are no rules to follow amongst these titles which are repeated, either following each other or recurring after a few other titles, sometimes carrying the jest of the episode with them, sometimes only giving the name of the town where the events take place.

The most striking aspect of incompleteness is Yorick's encounters with women which never go beyond an initial phase. The stress is on the pleasure derived from the art of seduction, in the delicate emotions aroused by getting closer to a member of the other sex – but not too close – which leaves the mystery intact and the desire undiminished. As the style and the message go hand in hand, some sentences are left unfinished and some stories untold. 'The Fragment. Paris' tells the story of a notary, and can be seen as a comic and exaggerated *mise en abyme* of the narrative. It starts by leaping *in medias res*, it is cut at the peak of suspense, events are governed by circumstances, and the story promised is said to be 'uncommon' and to be able to 'rouse up every affection in nature (*ASJ*, p. 255). The episode echoes Tristram's playful narrative techniques when Yorick tantalises the reader with the possibility that he may have found the two missing sheets of waste paper containing the rest of the story. He adds, 'Whether I did or no, will be seen hereafter', then never mentions the story again (*ASJ*, p. 256). However, Yorick's narrative is not Tristram's. The empiricist and impulsive nature of the protagonist's journey leads to fragmentation in *A Sentimental Journey*, but this fragmentation is limited and part of the aesthetic of the book. Moreover, it does not destroy meaning. Yorick describes just enough of an episode to allow a picture to emerge in all its complexity, but without resolving matters explicitly or giving his own conclusions upon them. Consequently, the interpretation of the scenes lies in each reader. The reader is guided by his own reactions to the text and by the various

clues given in each episode, while keeping in mind the spirit of the journey. Finally, instead of being carried further on by the continuity of the text, incompleteness makes scenes linger in the reader's imagination, allowing analysis, criticism, and introspection to take place.

As well as interruptions, there are thirteen sections, chapters or paragraphs, which deviate from the line of the story chronologically, geographically, or thematically, and thus, constitute digressions.²⁸ For instance, the second part of the chapter 'The Snuff-Box. Calais' interrupts the normal chronological course of the story to tell first about the history of the monk, then of Yorick's later visit to his grave (*ASJ*, pp. 102–03). The chapter 'The Starling. Road to Versailles' is a 'short history' – posterior to the time of the journey – written to 'fill up the blank' of an un-adventurous road (*ASJ*, pp. 204–05). 'The Sword. Rennes' is situated in between two episodes taking place in Versailles (*ASJ*, pp. 212–14). Although geographically totally misplaced, Yorick justifies his tale thematically, by explaining that the stories of the Chevalier and the Marquis d'E**** 'reflect light upon each other — and 'tis a pity they should be parted' (*ASJ*, p. 211). Nevertheless, the digressions are short and well delimited. They are not destabilising and they do not take over the chronological and geographical progression of the traveller through France. The story mainly moves on in one direction in time and in space, and one adventure succeeds to another on the way to Italy. Yorick's text is condensed, and it concentrates on a limited number of themes, images, and adventures, contrary to Tristram's text. Moreover, one can

²⁸ They can be found on pp. 91-95: analepsis which draws the fanciful portrait of Madame de L***; 101-03: short analepsis followed by a prolepsis which tells the story of the monk; 114-20: digression on travelling and writing); 130-31: 'A Fragment' on Love; 146-47: analepsis in memory of Eliza; 153: text of a love letter written by another; 195-96: analepsis recalling a conversation with Eugenius; 204-06: prolepsis on the fate of the starling; 211: prolepsis on the fate of the Chevalier de Saint Louis; 212-14: thematic syllepsis which tells the story of The Marquis d'E****; 224-26: digression on the pleasure of escapism; 228-29: digression on Bevoriskius which is a reflection on proper writing and the paradox of human nature; 253-55: 'The Fragment. Paris' in the Rabelaisian style; 257: little aside on travelling.

clearly trace Yorick's progress from one town to another on this journey: Calais – 'Montriul' (Montreuil) – Nampont – Amiens – Paris – a trip to Versailles and back to Paris – 'Moulines' (Moulins) – The 'Bourbonnois' (le Bourbonnais) – 'Mount Taurira' (Tarare) – On the way to Lyon.

Jean-Claude Dupas writes of *A Sentimental Journey* that there is a 'pliure' between the two volumes, which enables one to read the book in four different directions. He explains that each section 'forme un tableau complet, une anecdote', so that the reader has to reconstruct a story from the discontinuity.²⁹ Yet, in spite of the fragmented and digressive structure of the narrative, elements of continuity and progression can be found. Firstly, the narrator concretely anchors his story in time and space, mentioning the places he goes through on his journey towards Italy. He also follows the succession of nights and days. Moreover, there are phrases and markers of time and space which link short chapters to one another and reinforce the structure of the book. For instance, when Yorick is in Paris, 'The Mystery. Paris', ends with these words: 'I had got a riddle to amuse me for the rest of the evening, so I walk'd up stairs to my chamber' (*ASJ*, p. 240); and the first sentence of 'The Case Of Conscience. Paris' unveils an almost simultaneous action: 'I was immediately followed up by the master of the hotel' (*ASJ*, p. 241). The next chapter, 'The Riddle. Paris' takes place in the same hotel later in the day: 'When La Fleur came up to wait upon me at supper [...]' (*ASJ*, p. 244). 'Le Dimanche. Paris' marks the start of the following day in the same room: 'It was Sunday; and when La Fleur came in, in the morning [...]' (*ASJ*, p. 246). In addition, the narrator includes activities such as encounters, meals, spectacles, bed preparations, and new stages in the journey, which accentuate the realistic aspect of the

²⁹ Jean-Claude Dupas, *Sterne ou le vis-à-vis* (Lille: Presses Universitaires de Lille, 1984), p. 71.

progression of his journey. Yet, the realism of Yorick's journey is achieved almost without descriptions of the places visited and precise historical landmarks, such as the year, the month, or the date when the events are taking place. As there is little or no outside description, if it was not for local colour, the encounters would appear to be taking place in any imaginary set of streets. Though the celebrities and monuments of France are of no intrinsic value to the traveller, one finds anecdotes about French habits, for example in 'The Wig. Paris' (*ASJ*, pp. 158-60), and 'The Husband. Paris' (*ASJ*, pp. 166-67), subtle or comical comparisons between French and English customs, descriptions of typically French characters such as La Fleur, and French phrases dotted about in the narrative. Thus, France is the place chosen by the protagonist for his journey because, in the eighteenth century, it was acknowledged as a suitable locus in which to experience refined sentiments. The road and its progressive chronotope are essential for the chance encounters to happen and for the protagonist's learning process to take place. Nevertheless, the concrete elements of this road, that is to say historical time and the descriptions of the places where the encounters occur, are reduced to a bare minimum. They are only here to serve, and to place centre stage, Yorick's experiments and reflections.

On a structural level, within an episode, one finds words, phrases or descriptions of poses which are emphasised or repeated before and after an interruption and overpower the fragmentation. One such episode tells of the meeting between Yorick and Madame de L***. When he meets her 'In the Street. Calais', Yorick tells the reader that he takes her hand (*ASJ*, p. 90). In the next chapter, 'The Remise Door. Calais', the narrator digresses from the scene to recall how he felt about the woman when he first saw her talking with the monk (*ASJ*, pp. 96-98). The two chapters are clearly linked, despite the digression. 'In the Street. Calais' introduces the next chapter with the phrase: 'But what were the temptations

[...] shall be described with the same simplicity with which I felt them' (*ASJ*, p. 90). 'The Remise Door. Calais' echoes this phrase in its concluding sentence: 'Such were my temptations' (*ASJ*, p. 95). In addition, the narrator reminds the reader that he is still holding the lady's hand. The following chapter, likewise called 'The Remise Door. Calais', describes at length the holding of hands. It is interrupted by the exchange of snuffboxes and Yorick's summary of the past and future history of the monk in 'The Snuff-Box. Calais'. The chapter after, which is also called 'The Remise Door. Calais', starts with 'I had never quitted the lady's hand *all this time*' which, together with the repetition of the title, establishes a continuity of time and action (*ASJ*, p. 104, my italics).

On a thematic level, certain people and objects function both synchronically, in that they help Yorick to capture unique and fleeting emotions, and diachronically, in being part of a sentimental progression. For example, there are fifteen chapters linked to Madame de L*** which are situated in three different towns: Calais, Amiens, and Paris. In Calais, the lady is the main subject of interest, attraction, and mystery for eight chapters. In Amiens, Yorick only catches a glimpse of her in her 'post-chair' (*ASJ*, p. 145). His interest and the reader's curiosity are briefly rekindled by a letter in which she expresses her intention of telling her story to Yorick when they reach Paris. He proceeds to objectify her by answering her letter with a text borrowed from that of a drummer, which he only slightly adapts (*ASJ*, p. 153). In Paris, she is mentioned in two separate episodes, but the main subject of interest is her *fille de chambre*. Finally, in 'The Conquest. Paris', the reader realises that Yorick's promise to visit the lady will not be kept, since it is the last chapter related to her, and she is not mentioned in it at all. These intermittent meetings intensely experienced individually also carry with them elements of continuity and of change as they add on to one another. The progressive fading away of the lady shows that Yorick's attitude

slowly shifts from a feeling of benevolence for a woman's sufferings, which may exist only in his imagination, to a more sensual attraction for a fair young servant. Snuffboxes also appear several times in the first volume, punctuating it regularly like a recurrent motif (*ASJ*, pp. 99-101, 104, 133, 178-79). The first occurrence triggers a series of variations on the same theme. Yorick's attitude towards the monk during their first meeting is defined by prejudices, sarcasm, and a total lack of charity (*ASJ*, pp. 70-74). After this, he promises himself to 'learn better manners' (*ASJ*, p. 75). The opportunity arises soon afterwards, as the Franciscan's humble spirit of forgiveness and conciliation leads the two characters to exchange snuffboxes, a gesture which strongly imprints itself in Yorick's heart:

I guard this box, as I would the instrumental parts of my religion, to help my mind on to something better [...]; and oft and many a time have I called up by it the courteous spirit of its owner to regulate my own [...]. (*ASJ*, p. 101)

In the next chapter, as Yorick is about to take a pinch of snuff from his newly acquired box, he reports that, instead of expressing his sense of superiority over an 'inquisitive' and a 'simple' traveller with a sarcastic remark, he 'made a quiet bow to them' (*ASJ*, p. 104). In Montreuil, the description of 'poor little dwarfish brisk fellow' who offers a pinch of tobacco from his snuff-box to other beggars displays generosity and arouses gentle feelings; but the scene also contains a great deal of comedy and calculated charity on Yorick's part (*ASJ*, p. 133). This benevolence, which is too consciously self-approving, is an improvement on the spontaneous selfishness and rejection with which Yorick behaved in previous episodes. Later, as he takes a pinch of snuff out of the monk's box, Yorick is moved by a little man's distress at the *opera comique*. The scene is comically depicted. The protagonist thinks of 'how sweetly [the monk's spirit] would [...] have lent an ear to this poor soul's complaint!', or that he himself 'could have leaped out of the box to have redressed' the situation. However, he does not actually get out of his way to help the victim, instead, he 'lift[s] up [his] eyes with an emotion' (*ASJ*, pp. 178-79). At the end of

the chapter, Yorick and the old French officer who called a sentinel to help the dwarf have a small argument which takes the plight of the dwarf to the level of national issues between Britain and France. But the officer does not take offence, and he offers a 'pinch of snuff' to Yorick for his '*bon mot*' as a sign of mutual understanding beyond their differences (*ASJ*, p. 179). This last reference to the snuffbox most closely resembles the first one. It closes the circle of the development of the themes of temperance, curtsy, and conciliation – qualities with which the snuff-box becomes associated as the episodes unfold. Yet, layers of meanings multiply without stratifying in *A Sentimental Journey*. This is because Yorick's behaviour is never straightforward. Unlike a character such as Tom Jones, whose behaviour is candid and completely open, even when he makes mistakes, there are ambiguities and subtle shades in Yorick's sentiments. Yorick is self-conscious, he does not always take himself seriously, and when he does, it allows the reader to have an ironic stance towards him. Thus, recurrences of characters and objects bridge the various stages of the protagonist's journey, not with a succession of events linked by causality, but by describing each meeting in its uniqueness and at the same time creating a movement of progression and change which thickens the structural and thematic web between the episodes.³⁰

The *Journey* appears to be guided by chance meetings, open to circumstances, not predictable. The tone is given at the outset of the novel as Yorick suddenly decides to go to France and is on the other side of the channel in an instant:

³⁰ Beyond the scope of our study, and beyond the textual frame of this book, there are obvious elements of continuity with *Tristram Shandy*. The main one, of course, is that Yorick, the protagonist of *A Sentimental Journey* bears strong similarities with Yorick, the parson of the Shandy family. One can also find a common reference to an extra-diegetical character: Eugenius (*ASJ*, pp. 195-96), and Yorick's meeting with Maria is clearly presented as a posterior visit to that of Tristram's (*ASJ*, p. 269).

I went straight back to my lodgings [...] — took a place in the Dover stage; and the packet sailing at nine the next morning — by three I had got sat down to my dinner [...] in France. (*ASJ*, pp. 65-66)

This is partly due to Yorick's impulsive nature as he acts quickly following his feelings and his curiosity. As in *Tristram Shandy*, one can closely relate the form and content of the creation with the personality of its pseudo-creator. Yorick is not afraid to be adventurous and 'to walk up a dark entry' (*ASJ*, pp. 115-16, 257). He claims, changing his mind for the third time about the direction he is to take, 'I am govern'd by circumstances — I cannot govern them'; or again, 'I seldom go to the place I set out for' (*ASJ*, pp. 209, 208). On a large scale, Yorick is going towards Italy. However, on a small scale, Yorick's movements around the towns visited are unplanned, spontaneous, and apparently aimless. Circumstances, combined with imagination, play an important part in the protagonist's experiences as well as in his progression. For instance, the first time Yorick comes across the dead ass in 'The Bidet', he does not feel any sympathy for the animal but rather laughs at the misfortunes it causes La Fleur. It is in the next chapter only, when he hears the owner's tale in Nampont, that his sympathy is aroused. Here, circumstances do not let him make the most of these sorrowful feelings as his postillon starts the coach in a 'full gallop', putting him out of temper, then slows down, which makes him fall asleep (*ASJ*, pp. 138-44). The theme of captivity seems to obey the same rules. In need of a passport, Yorick is threatened with the Bastille by the master of the hotel. Each time he meets with new circumstances, his state of mind towards captivity is modified. First he worries and takes the problem seriously. Then, recalling a joking conversation about imprisonment he had with Eugenius, he reasons himself out of fear by transforming the threat into a linguistic game: '— And as for the Bastile! the terror is in the word'. (*ASJ*, p. 196). It is the voice of a starling saying 'I can't get out' that triggers a hymn to Liberty and the picture of a captive in Yorick's mind (*ASJ*, p. 197). It is not the reflection upon his own probable captivity — i.e.

a rational act – nor the actual distress of one of his fellow sufferers, which throw Yorick into a trance over confinement. Rather, it is his interpretation of the chant of a bird into a song of liberty, a bird which was trained to repeat the same words mechanically without grasping their meaning. Thus, the right circumstances trigger the right emotions, or rather, the right state of mind. Before conjuring the image of the captive Yorick claims: ‘I was in a right frame for it, and so I gave full scope to my imagination’ (*ASJ*, p. 201). One of the most poignant portraits of captivity in literature is created, not from observation, but by fancy: ‘I saw the iron enter his soul – I burst into tears – I could not sustain the picture of confinement which my fancy had drawn’ (*ASJ*, p. 203). The final irony is that *La Fleur* buys the bird for his master who never frees it and sends it back to England as an object of trade. The unusual bird is said to go from one anonymous master to the other to amuse their curiosity. The influence of Adam Smith on *A Sentimental Journey* is central. According to Smith, sympathy is linked to imagination: when our imagination projects someone else’s consciousness on ours, we identify with the person and we feel the same distress.³¹ This phenomenon is almost mechanical, cannot be controlled, and in *A Sentimental Journey*, it is not incompatible with selfishness. It is imaginative sympathy which Yorick feels for the starling, leads him to cry over the plight of the prisoner he himself created, or over the tomb of the monk (*ASJ*, pp. 102-03). Imagination also plays an important part in Yorick’s attraction to women. When he first notices Madame de L***, he cannot see her face and comments: ‘twas not material [...] *Fancy* had finished the whole head’ (*ASJ*, p. 92). Soon after, when he realises that her face was ‘not critically handsome’, it is his ‘frame of mind’ which makes it ‘interesting’. Yorick explains: ‘I fancied it wore the characters of a

³¹ On the link between sympathy and imagination in Smith’s account of systems of moral philosophy, see Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), p. 307.

widow'd look' (*ASJ*, p. 93-94). Far from reading a reliable scientific account of the protagonist's progress through France, one is taken on a subjective and emotional journey which the reader needs to interpret.

Whereas the representation of the outside world is minimal in *A Sentimental Journey*, in *Humphrey Clinker*, the characters include in their letters descriptions of the countryside and of the towns they visit, with details on the landscape, the architecture, the history, the arts, the economy, and the customs. In that sense, Smollett's travel fiction is closer to the travelogues of the time, where lists of drawbacks were made and towns described in a practical way as a guide for tourists. Frédéric Ogée reminds one that, 'in the middle of the eighteenth century travelling was also an economic and scientific reality, and at a time when the British presence was being extended all over the world, the traveller's mission often became one of systematic enquiry and classification'.³² For example, Matthew Bramble describes London:

I am credibly informed, that in the space of seven years, eleven thousand new houses have been built in one quarter of Westminster, exclusive of what is daily added to other parts of this unweildy metropolis. Pimlico and Knightsbridge are now almost joined to Chelsea and Kensington [...]. (*HC*, p. 86)

It must be allowed, indeed, for the credit of the present age, that London and Westminster are much better paved and lighted than they were formerly. The new streets are spacious, regular, and airy; and the houses generally convenient. The Bridge at Blackfriars is a noble monument of taste and public-spirit. (*HC*, p. 87)

Yet, in *Humphry Clinker*, the main role of the places visited is to help in the characterisation of the protagonists. The environment is very important in the sense that its description reveals the personality of the characters, as their moods and ailments colour what they see and how they write about it in their letters. For instance, Matthew's splenetic

³² Frédéric Ogée, 'Channelling Emotions: Travel and Literary Creation in Smollett and Sterne', *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth-Century*, 292 (1991), 27-42 (p. 33).

complaint about Bath is set against Lydia's enthusiastic discovery of the town in two contiguous letters:

Instead of that peace, tranquility and ease, so necessary to those who labour under bad health, weak nerves, and irregular spirits; here we have nothing but noise, tumult, and hurry; with the fatigue and slavery of maintaining a ceremonial, more stiff, formal, and oppressive, than the etiquette of a German elector. (*HC*, p. 34)

Bath is to me a new world – All is gayety, good-humour, and diversion. The eye is continually entertained with the splendour of dress and equipage; and the ear with the sound of coaches, chaises, chairs, and other carriages. *The merry bells ring round*, from morn till night. Then we are welcomed by the city-waits in our own lodgings: we have musick in the Pump-room every morning, cotillions every fore-noon in the rooms, balls twice a week, and concerts every other night, besides private assemblies and parties without number [...]. (*HC*, p. 39)

In volume seven of *Tristram Shandy*, Sterne already pictures his narrator consciously straying away from the traditional travel-book description of the towns visited:

'Now, before I quit Calais,' a travel-writer would say, 'it would not be amiss to give some account of it.' — Now I think it very much amiss — that a man cannot go quietly through a town, and let it alone, when it does not meddle with him, but that he must be turning about and drawing his pen at every kennel he crosses over, merely, o'my conscience, for the sake of drawing it [...]. (*TS*, VII 4, pp. 579-80)

His main reason for not describing the place is given below:

I know no more of Calais (except the little my barber told me of it, as he was whetting his razor) than I do this moment of Grand Cairo; for it was dusky in the evening when I landed, and dark as pitch in the morning when I set out [...]. (*TS*, VII 4, p. 580)

This does not prevent Tristram from taunting the reader with what he sees as an easy challenge:

by merely knowing what is what, and by drawing this from that in one part of the town and by spelling and putting this and that together in another – I would lay any travelling odds, that I this moment write a chapter upon Calais as long as my arm; and with so distinct and satisfactory a detail of every item, which is worth a stranger's curiosity in the town – that you would take me for the town clerk of Calais itself [...]. (*ibid.*)

In the next chapter, Tristram proceeds to make educated guesses and to state the obvious about the town in a knowledgeable style, parodying the style of the standard guidebook, and imitating parts of the text of Piganiol's *Nouveau Voyage* (*TS*, VII 5, p. 581).³³ One reads for example about the parochial church:

I had not an opportunity of taking its exact dimensions, but it is pretty easy to make a tolerable conjecture of 'em – for as there are fourteen thousand inhabitants in the town, if the church holds them all, it must be considerably large – and if it will not – 'tis a very great pity they have not another – it is built in form of a cross, and dedicated to the Virgin Mary; the steeple has a spire to it [...]. (*ibid.*)

Our traveller is also greatly impressed by the 'great Square':

tho' I cannot say 'tis either well paved or well built; but 'tis in the heart of the town, and most of the streets, especially those in that quarter, all terminate in it; could there have been a fountain in all Calais, which it seems there cannot, as such an object would have been a great ornament, it is not to be doubted, but that the inhabitants would have had it in the very centre of this square [...]. (*TS*, VII 5, p. 582)

These passages could be compared with the serious description Lydia gives of London in

Humphry Clinker:

The cities of London and Westminster are spread out into an incredible extent. The streets, squares, rows, lanes, and alleys, are innumerable. Palaces, public buildings, and churches, rise in every quarter; and, amongst these last, St. Paul's appears with the most astonishing pre-eminence. They say it is not so large as St. Peter's at Rome; but, for my own part, I can have no idea of any earthly temple more grand and magnificent. (*HC*, p. 91)

But Tristram puts an end to the game, as he was about to launch into a fifty-page tale of the history of the place:

— But courage! gentle reader! — I scorn it — 'tis enough to have thee in my power — but to make use of the advantage which the fortune of the pen has now gained over thee, would be too much [...]. (*TS*, VII 6, p. 584)

³³ See also the editors' note about Piganiol (*TS*, vol. III, note 581.6ff p. 450).

Tristram denounces as an abuse of authority the way travel-writers dwell on accounts which are taken out of history books written by others for the sake of filling up pages to sell. Moreover, it might also be implied that detailed historical, geographical and architectural descriptions are only grafted onto a work of fiction, they are not essential to it.

In *A Sentimental Journey*, as the erratic title headings illustrate, the path Yorick takes on his journey is not the ordered and methodical itinerary of the traditional Grand Tour. Instead, it is the 'quiet journey of the heart' in search of delicate sensations and communion with his fellow-beings – especially female (*ASJ*, p.219). The whole purpose of his journey is different from that of any other travel fiction since, as the title makes it clear, it is a 'Sentimental' journey. The way Yorick travels encourages the reader, along with him, to pay attention to every detail that can arouse curiosity, desire, or compassion, and to analyse them. Yorick himself takes time to observe all sorts of people: 'I remain'd at the gate of the hotel for some time, looking at everyone who pass'd by, and forming conjectures upon them' (*ASJ*, p. 239). His temporality can expand to fit in the multitude of events which chance brings to a receptive man such as he. For instance, the first seventeen chapters are devoted to one single hour spent in Calais. They describe what seems to be a great number of episodes for such a short period of time. These include a meal to the health of the king of France, Yorick's several meetings with the monk and with Madame de L***, the writing of the preface in the *Desobligeant*, a discussion with M. Dessenin, a lesson of directness from a French captain, and the parting with Madame de L***. Thus, Yorick exclaims '— What a large volume of adventures may be grasped within this little span of life by him who interests his heart in everything' (*ASJ*, p. 114). Consequently, the *Journey* is made up of events which are carefully chosen and put side by side, like vignettes containing the essence of the traveller's experiments. Within these vignettes, the pace of events is slow

and Yorick takes great pleasure in detailing every shade of sensation minutely, as the reader notices with the female encounters. For example, half of the chapter 'The Gloves' is devoted to the description of Yorick and the *grisette* looking at each other:

The beautiful Grisset look'd sometimes at the gloves, then side-ways to the window, then at the gloves — and then at me. I was not disposed to break silence — I follow'd her example: so I look'd at the gloves, then to the window, then at the gloves, and then at her — and so on alternately. (*ASJ*, pp. 168-69)

Repetitions are extremely rare in *A Sentimental Journey*. Here, we notice that, with the punctuation, they serve a particular end: they convey the movements of the two characters and the embarrassment mixed with a certain attraction. The insistence of the last phrase lets comedy pierce through the game of seduction. The whole scene outlines the power of the eye when it is capable of 'look[ing] into [Yorick's] very heart and reins' (*ASJ*, p. 169). In 'The Temptation. Paris', the association in the imagination of the narrator of his feelings of attraction and guilt, the bright surroundings and the sunset light, give birth to a scene where what could have been a simple blush turns into an audacious romantic painting. The scene brings into our mind the warm hues, the suggestiveness, and the delicacy of Jean-Honoré Fragonard's erotic picture *Le Verrou*:

It was a fine still evening, in the latter end of the month of May — the crimson window curtains (which were of the same colour of those of the bed) were drawn close — the sun was setting, and reflected through them so warm a tint into the fair *fille de chambre*'s face — I thought she blush'd — the idea of it made me blush myself — we were quite alone; and that super-induced a second blush before the first could get off. (*ASJ*, p. 234)

Yorick wants to learn how to 'translate' people's behaviour in order to communicate without misunderstanding. This is why he pays attention to fleeting details such as gestures and looks, which he often finds more meaningful than words. Thus, he claims 'there are certain combined looks of simple subtlety [...] that all the languages of Babel set loose together could not express them' (*ASJ*, p. 168). Nevertheless, a detailed description in *A Sentimental Journey* does not mean a lengthy and cumbersome one. The style which Sterne

adopts in his book is concise, and there never seems to be a word too many: every passage is evocative and, therefore, is often ambiguous. The dynamics of the description of the feelings is thus very different from that in *Clarissa*, in which the protagonists insist on giving the 'particulars' in details. Rather than concentrating on the outpouring of the heart, Yorick succinctly describes the gestures and situations which give birth to the erotic feelings, the self-gratifying imaginative flights, and the sympathy he experiences. It is also a different approach to that of Moll Flanders, who is, like Yorick, often concise in her descriptions. Moll summarises rather than suggests, and her summaries are either factual or, if they deal with emotions, very explicit.

What is more, this 'quiet journey of the heart' could be read as a physiology of sentiments (*ASJ*, p. 219). The body has a capital role as it is directly linked to emotions through the blood (the pulse, blushes), tears, and above all through the contact with the hand. Writing is also a very physical activity, as is illustrated by the hampering and suggestive 'see-saw' movement of the *Desobligeant* which, as Yorick explains to an inquisitive traveller, is caused by 'the agitation [...] of writing a preface' (*ASJ*, pp. 78, 85). Through the body, Yorick's writing is strongly linked to emotions, which explains its impulsiveness, its peaks and anticlimaxes, and even the pace of the flowing blood one can feel in the text of 'The Pulse' (*ASJ*, pp. 161-65). Whereas *Clarissa* constantly strives to avoid, postpone, or fight against the events which could bring her emotional turmoil, Yorick seeks them actively and cherishes them. Thus, the actual setting of the journey is the body and the heart of the sentimental traveller and of the people he meets, and the outside world is often described in a subjective way as it is influenced by Yorick's senses and the imagination. Virginia Woolf writes about Sterne's narrator that 'he was travelling in France indeed, but the road was often through his own mind, and his chief adventures were not

with brigands and precipices but with the emotions of his own heart'.³⁴ Both Yorick and Moll Flanders go out without a precise route in mind, in search of adventures, and are open to circumstances. For instance, when Moll sets off for her last search for booty, she explains: 'It was on the Christmas-day following in the Evening, that to finish a long Train of Wickedness, I went Abroad to see what might offer in my way' (*MF*, p. 269). However, Moll's wanderings are to do with outside events, especially theft opportunities before her conversion, whereas for Yorick, the place of interest is the inner self. In *A Sentimental Journey*, human beings are seen as temples. They are rich with potentialities to experience the flights of sentimentalism which Yorick seeks. This is what he says to the Count when asked about women and the purpose of his journey to France:

I could wish [...] to spy the *nakedness* of their hearts, and through the different disguises of customs, climates, and religion, find out what is good in them, to fashion my own by – and therefore am I come.

It is for this reason [...] that I have not seen the Palais royal – nor the Luxembourg – nor the Façade of the Louvre [...]. (*ASJ*, p. 218)

Yorick's journey is a positive, invigorating and sensuous experience of travelling in a foreign country. Communication and empathy are the keys to its success.

The *Journey* is fragmented and it contains digressions. It is made of vignettes which might be seen as self-sufficient. One could have the impression that it is possible to learn from each individual chapter without having to link it to the rest of the book. This, and the fact that there are episodes or themes which echo one another in the book, might be what leads Jean-Claude Dupas to concentrate on the fragmentation without taking into account the elements of continuity within and across the various episodes and the progressive forward movement of the narrator in time, space and in his learning process. Because of the

³⁴ Laurence Sterne, *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy*, with an introduction by Virginia Woolf, ed. by Humphrey Milford (London: Oxford University Press, 1928), intro. p. 80.

emphasis on chance adventures, the impression that the book deals with trifling matters, the leisurely descriptions and the detailed analysis of emotional events under fanciful headings, the plot is hardly perceptible and does not appear to take over life. However, the feeling of randomness and leisure is counterbalanced by several factors. The main narrative voice is in the past tense and the text contains analepses and prolepses, which implies a certain calculated distance between the teller and the tale. There are metalepses which refer to the text as an object being built which sometimes include the reader in its construction. If chance brings the adventures, they are carefully selected and controlled as the narrator makes it clear about the choice of his tales:

I know the reason. *It is time the reader should know it*, for in the order of things in which it happened, it was omitted; not that it was out of my head; but that, had I told it then, it might have been forgot now — and *now is the time I want it*. (*ASJ*, p. 192)

Eugenius, thou wilt smile at the remembrance of a short dialogue which pass'd betwixt us the moment I was going to set out — *I must tell it here*. (*ASJ*, p. 195)

Just heaven! — it would fill up twenty volumes — and alas! I have but a few small pages left of this to crowd it into — and half of these *must be taken up with the poor Maria* [...]. (*ASJ*, p. 269, my italics in these three quotations)

Moreover, the links and the sense of unity Sterne establishes across the journey are vital considering how easy it is to misinterpret individual chapters in *A Sentimental Journey*. The narrator's ironic detachment and self-consciousness, the dramatic irony, the ambiguities caused by Sterne's use of the language, and the space left for the reader's imagination in the book make it necessary for one to keep in mind the overall spirit of the journey and to follow the progression the protagonist makes, step by step, even if the progress is not uniform.

In *A Sentimental Journey*, although Yorick's learning process is not even or easy to define, there is more than a man sporadically feeling pleasure and pain, then moving on, as is more or less the case with Moll Flanders. Moll seems immune to the great blows she

experiences throughout her life, which would crush anyone but her. She repeatedly bounces back, ready for a new set of adventures, leaving her life-style and beloved behind, with very little afterthought. As G. A. Starr explains:

if Moll is in some ways the product of sociological and psychological conditioning, in other ways she is quite untouched by experience, a free spirit whom no pitch can defile. In this sense she leads a charmed life: she is not spared vicissitudes, but spared their ordinary consequences. (*MF*, Introduction, p. ix)

The movement forward and the survival of the fittest matter most. Thus, when one of Moll's fellow thieves is caught and brought to Newgate, Moll has not a single word of compassion for him; she only fears that he might buy his life at the expense of hers. She cruelly and selfishly concludes: 'at last she sent me the joyful News that he was hang'd, which was the best News to me that I had heard a great while' (*MF*, p. 220). In addition, there is no guilty comment from Moll the repentant narrator after this statement. Thus, whereas Moll learns through her life how to make the most of outside circumstances for her comfort, Yorick attempts at understanding himself and others better, in a sensuous and philosophical search. *A Sentimental Journey* could appear as a series of trials and errors, where the protagonist makes some progress even if he sometimes struggles or fails. The first few chapters which precede the preface do not give a very positive image of our traveller. He is angry with the King of France, rejects the monk who asks for charity, and encloses himself in a vehicle only made for one person. At the end of the preface, he rejects the company of his compatriots, but from then on, he claims that he wishes to make an effort. National pride is an obstacle to the protagonist's goal. For example, he calls Monsieur Dessein a 'Jew' and a 'Turk' when he is displeased with him for asking what he thinks is too much money for a vehicle (*ASJ*, p. 89). In the episode 'the Dwarf. Paris', the German is pictured as an arrogant, warrior-looking obtrusive man (*ASJ*, p. 178). Yorick also tries to prove the superiority of the English over the French whom he finds 'too

serious' and so well mannered that they have lost the charm of idiosyncrasy (*ASJ*, pp. 233). Moreover, when he sets out for France, Yorick intends to learn about the nation from its particulars, which he does in numerous instances. However, as Paul Denizot notices, Sterne's narrator also has a tendency to make generalisations from discrete examples of behaviour – which can have as bad an effect on judgement as prejudices do.³⁵ Thus, when he hears the barber making an exaggerated comment about a wig, Yorick rapidly concludes about the French in general that: 'the grandeur is *more* in the *word*; and *less* in the *thing*' (*ASJ*, p. 159). Later on, when he sees a dwarf, he cannot help generalising the situation by stating boldly that, in Paris, 'every third man [is] a pigmy!' (*ASJ*, p. 175). However, chauvinistic feelings are rare and they are less frequent as the journey goes on. In addition, they are often uttered in an ironic tone. For instance, when Yorick extravagantly scorns the French language which he finds too rude for a man like him to use: 'Grant me but decent words to exclaim in, and I will give my nature way. / — But as these were not to be had in France, I resolved to take every evil just as it befell me without any exclamation at all' (*ASJ*, p. 137, my italics). In addition, these feelings are tempered by Yorick's will to get a better understanding of cultural differences and to go beyond preconceived ideas. Moreover, no other protagonist, whether in *Humphry Clinker*, *Moll Flanders*, or *Tom Jones*, sets off on his or her adventures with the conscious determination to improve himself or herself, even though they may acknowledge changes when they happen.

One can notice that the protagonist's reactions always go from negative to positive. Yorick often makes a sarcastic comment or has a movement of rejection in the first place,

³⁵ For the movement from plural to singular and from singular to plural, see Paul Denizot, 'Singulier et pluriel dans *A Sentimental Journey*', *Bulletin de la société d'études anglo-américaines des XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles*, 37 (1993), 73-83 (p. 80).

then he becomes aware of his bad feelings and has a positive and generous thought, word, or gesture. This is the common pattern, except in the case of Yorick's attachment to the *Desobligeant* which turns into repulsion. Yet, this repulsion implies opening to the world and welcoming the other in the journey (*ASJ*, p. 87). It is also the case with flattery, which he overuses in Paris society, then spitefully rejects as 'prostitution', and turns to the countryside instead. Yorick explains: 'at this price I could have eaten and drank and been merry all the days of my life at Paris; but 'twas a dishonest *reckoning* — I grew ashamed of it — it was the gain of a slave — every sentiment of honour revolted against it' (*ASJ*, p. 266). In both these cases, Yorick's rejection, instead of turning a straightforward negative feeling into a positive one, turns a falsely positive feeling into a really positive one. Throughout the book, the examples of the movement of Yorick's reactions from the negative to the positive are numerous and varied. In the first two chapters, Yorick is critical of the king of France until the Burgundy has some effect on his mood (*ASJ*, pp. 65-69). He first refuses to give money to the monk, and later exchanges snuffboxes with him (*ASJ*, pp. 70-74, 99-101). In Calais, he wishes Monsieur Dessein 'at the devil', and quickly tells himself off for it (*ASJ*, p. 89). In Montreuil he misjudges the talents of his servant La Fleur before meeting him, then praises him for 'the festivity of his temper' (*ASJ*, p. 126). He tries to help the Dwarf after having denigrated short people (*ASJ*, pp. 174-80). Finally, he buys ruffles from the grisette despite his previous resolution not to give her any money (*ASJ*, pp. 241-3). Yet, if it takes quite a long time and an inner struggle for the protagonist to change his attitude towards the monk at the beginning of the story, after this episode, the gap of time between Yorick's negative attitude and the acknowledgement of his mistakes diminishes. What is more, as time goes by, his mistakes are less numerous as most of them are to be found in the first volume. Yet, Yorick is not portrayed as a perfect role-model one can read about passively, and, as a result, *A Sentimental Journey* is not a model of

sentimental behaviour, but a subjective depiction of a propaedeutics to philanthropy. The dramatic irony, the contradictions and the ambiguities of Yorick's feelings and behaviour can only lead the reader to be critical of the narrator, who is presented by Sterne as 'the instrument of the questioning' of the sentimental journey.³⁶ Nevertheless, humour and tolerance towards oneself and towards other people's faulty nature are virtues Sterne succeeds in conveying. One feels that he wishes to praise genuine sentiments even if men are imperfect. By keeping these two poles in mind, the reader can go beyond the ambiguities and the contradictions that the book offers.

Despite their brevity and their absence of follow-up, Yorick's encounters with women clearly show that a learning process is taking place in him. The first time he takes the hand of Madame de L***, he tries hard to keep it but he does not have the necessary skills. He loses it first, and when she gives it back to him, he has to find a way not to lose it again (*ASJ*, pp. 96-97). Then, what Yorick calls his 'dirty passions' ('AVARICE', 'CAUTION', 'COWARDICE') make him miss an opportunity to travel with the lady (*ASJ*, pp. 105-06). In the same episode he learns a lesson of simplicity and forwardness from a little French captain who frankly asks her the personal questions that Yorick did not dare to ask or did not know how to (*ASJ*, pp. 107-08). Finally, Yorick's parting with Madame de L*** is a success. He makes her blush, which is a sign that her emotions come to the surface. He manages to exchange opinions with her, and she even 'suffered [him] to kiss her hand twice [...] with a look of sensibility mixed with a concern' (*ASJ*, pp. 112-13). During his first female encounter in Paris with the *grisette*, which mainly consists of looks and slight

³⁶ Madeleine Descargues, 'A Sentimental Journey, or "The Case of (In)delicacy"', translation by the author of 'A Sentimental Journey, ou le cas d'indélicatesse', *Etudes Anglaises*, 46 (1993), 407-19, in *Critical Essays on Laurence Sterne*, ed. by Melvyn New (New York: G.K. Hall, London: Prentice Hall, 1998), pp. 243-53 (p. 248).

touches, delicate emotions are aroused and seduction and good manners go both ways (*ASJ*, pp. 161-70). After his 'vile translation' of the attitude to adopt towards the 'Marquesina di F****' at the *opera comique*, Yorick succeeds so well in his effort at translating which conduct is required, that, instead of going to the *opera*, he is invited to step in a stage-coach with her. The reader is left to guess what sort of 'connection' ensued from this encounter, which 'gave [him] more pleasure than any one [he] had the honour to make in Italy' (*ASJ*, p. 173). With the young *fille de chambre*, in the second volume, the contact is more intense than with the *grisette*, and the emotions seems deeper than with the *Marquesina* (*ASJ*, p. 187-91). He spends a long time walking with her and experiences a feeling of 'consanguinity' towards her (*ASJ*, p. 190). When she comes to see him at his hotel, the strong feeling of consanguinity is shaken by a 'temptation' to get closer to her. The reader witnesses a sort of ballet where the two characters blush in harmony, touch each other, are sometimes close, sometimes apart, sit on the bed together in one movement, until... Yorick takes the *fille de chambre* to the door (*ASJ*, pp. 234-38). His meeting with Maria is also very intense and has, furthermore, a spiritual dimension. It is the only episode in which the word 'soul' appears, and is repeated twice in the same chapter:

I am never so perfectly conscious of the existence of a soul within me, as when I am entangled in [melancholy adventures]. (*ASJ*, p. 270)

[...] and then I wip'd [her tears] again – and as I did it, I felt such undescribable emotions within me, as I am sure could not be accounted for from any combinations of matter and motion.

I am positive I have a soul [...]. (*ASJ*, p. 271)

The feelings he experiences are those of compassion and tender pity. The words Yorick utters to the maid evoke both the charity of the Good Shepherd in the Gospel, and Jesus's words at the Last Supper: 'thou shouldst eat of my own bread, and drink of my own cup [...] in all thy weaknesses and wanderings I would seek after thee and bring thee back' (*ASJ*, p. 273). In the next chapter, he tells the reader about her feminine beauty: 'so much

was there about her of all [...] the eye looks for in woman' (*ASJ*, p. 275). This remark, and his suggestion that, if he could forget about Eliza, 'she should *not only eat of my bread and drink of my own cup*, but Maria should lay in my bosom, and be unto me as a daughter' makes us wonder about the purity of his previous Christian statement (*ibid.*). This is one example of the constant wavering in Yorick between a spiritual sentimental attitude and a self-gratifying erotic attitude, which makes the reader distance himself from a narrator who does not represent closure, or a definite moral attitude, but rather who introduces ambiguity and a confusion of feelings and desires which are never fully reconciled. His meeting with Maria seems nevertheless to have expanded his capacity to feel compassion for others. A double movement upward towards heaven and outward from the self to the other is expressed in strong terms. The lyrical and solemn address to the 'god' of feelings is emphatic, with the repetitions of the words 'generous' and 'great', the concentration of exclamation marks, and the words in capital letters. It clashes with the rather concise and understated style of the book:

— Dear sensibility! source inexhausted of all that's precious in our joys, or costly in our sorrows! thou chainest thy martyr down upon his bed of straw — and 'tis thou who lifts him up to HEAVEN — eternal fountain of our feelings! — 'tis here I trace thee — and this is thy divinity which stirs within me — not that, in some sad and sickening moments, "*my soul shrinks back upon herself, and startles at destruction*" — mere pomp of words! — but that I feel some generous joys and generous cares beyond myself — all comes from thee, great, great SENSORIUM of the world! (*ASJ*, p. 278)

If Yorick's meeting with Maria is uplifting spiritually (even though the feeling is tinted with sexual desire), his last meeting with the 'Piedmontese' drags him back more obviously towards the temptation of the flesh (*ASJ*, p. 288).

There is a twofold movement in Yorick's pursuit of love. He is constant to Eliza, who is clearly his cherished icon amongst all women: 'the little picture which I have so long worn, and so often have told thee, Eliza, I would carry with me into my grave' (*ASJ*, p. 67). But

he also experiences repeated erotic flirtations. Madeleine Descargues believes that Yorick's inconsistency is 'anchored in the fluidity of his search for sentiment, in a journey that subsumes the fickleness of sentiment within the constancy of the pursuit' (Descargues, p. 151). Thus, Yorick's faith in love, and his constancy in the pursuit of sentiment, can be seen as the driving forces of the journey which help him to accept the complexity of his nature, to fight selfishness in order to open up to others so that he can benefit fully from his encounters. Despite this, Yorick's being a traveller results in his keeping his distance, ensuring that his experiences are brief, and therefore not committing himself. Yorick's constancy also reinforces the continuity established by the markers of time and space across the book and the links and reminders of the story within the episodes which have a unifying and structural effect on the narrative:

De plus, ces contacts qui s'établissent, s'interrompent et se renouent, confèrent au roman son rythme interne et sa continuité; car l'atomisation apparente du récit, et son pointillisme finissent par être oblitérés par l'unité de ton qui résulte de l'omniprésence de l'émotion et du sentiment.³⁷

Emotions experienced with women are not the only type of sentiments Yorick aspires to – although the complexity of the *Sentimental Journey* is such that feelings of various kinds often overlap. Apart from some obvious gestures of charity, such as the distribution of money to the poor in Montriul, many episodes show that Yorick demonstrates a growing and subtler consideration for the needs of others (*ASJ*, pp. 132-35). Yorick is an unusual traveller in the sense that he is not afraid or embarrassed to learn from simple people, even if the 'manners' he copies are not always 'better', such as the beggar's art of flattery which the protagonist uses in the high society of Paris (*ASJ*, pp. 260-66). People with power or

³⁷ Paul Denizot, 'Yorick et la quête du bonheur, ou les équivoques ludiques du corps et de l'âme dans *A Sentimental Journey*', in *Le Corps et l'âme en Grande-Bretagne au XVIII^e siècle*, Paul-Gabriel Boucé et Suzanne Halimi éds (Paris: Pubs. de la Sorbonne, 1986), pp. 157-66 (p. 161).

money are not always seen in a very good light. These include the king (pp. 66-67); landlords of the hotels he stays at (M. Dessein p. 89; the 'master of the hotel' in Paris, p. 241); and the noble company he spends time with, distributing flattery (pp. 261-66). Instead, he seems to concentrate on the lower class of citizens such as *grisettes*, beggars, a monk, a fille de chambre, a deranged maid, a family of peasants and his servant; and he tells the story of a poor Marquis and of an poor old dying gentleman (*ASJ*, pp. 212-14 and 252-55). Thus, Yorick shows tolerance and compassion towards the men and women he meets – whichever language they speak, whatever their social class or their religion. For instance, when La Fleur's bidet escapes and leaves him on foot, Yorick chooses to take his servant inside his vehicle with him, without emphasising his humble gesture. He simply says 'there remained no alternative but taking La Fleur either behind the chaise, or into it. — / I preferred the latter' (*ASJ*, p. 137). His attitude towards religion is another example of his attempts at open-mindedness. For instance, although he writes a comic scene about La Fleur's promise to bring 'pardons from Rome' to his female admirers, he goes beyond the clichés common in England about the Papists when he realises the wrongs he did to the Franciscan (*ASJ*, pp. 128, 100-03). Moreover, towards the end of the *Journey*, Yorick does not mock Maria's tune to the Virgin. Rather, he includes it in a sentimental episode where it is valorised (*ASJ*, p. 274). 'The Grace' shows a further acceptance of religious pluralism and marks a break down of social class, as, although the French peasant's dance is a mixture of paganism and of Catholicism, it appears to Yorick as 'the best sort of thanks to heaven that an illiterate peasant could pay – / — Or a learned prelate either' (*ASJ*, p. 284). It is towards the end of his journey through France, in the French peasant's little farmhouse, that the experience he has gained in communicating with people and understanding different customs helps Yorick to be accepted as one of the family straight away:

I sat down at once like a son of the family; and to invest myself in the character as speedily as I could, I instantly borrowed the old man's knife, and taking up the loaf, cut myself a hearty luncheon; and as I did it I saw a testimony in every eye, not only of an honest welcome, but a welcome mix'd with thanks that I had not seem'd to doubt it. (*ASJ*, p. 281)

Yorick is in control of his gestures and knows what is expected of him beforehand. He also knows how to read approval in people's eyes, and, it seems that, without the need for words, a perfect communication is established.³⁸ One can notice that Yorick's address to 'Nature' in this chapter echoes the last sentence he utters before leaving Paris: 'the more children of Art – I languished for those of Nature' (*ASJ*, p. 266). Simplicity and honest feelings of kinship in this bucolic scene are idealised as opposed to the artificial life of Paris which sickens our traveller. So, geographic and sentimental progression contribute to the impact of the scene on Yorick, since his rejection of the high society of Paris makes him enjoy the company of simple country people all the better. One can wonder if the protagonist would have been capable of appreciating and of mixing in so well with such a company at the beginning of his travels if he had not 'learn[t] better manners as [he got] along' (*ASJ*, p. 75).

The protagonist's learning process is grounded in time and space, as Yorick decides to step out of the *Desobligeant* and to give up most of his prejudices and his arrogance during his tour. He becomes capable of opening his mind and his heart to difference, to go towards people and communicate more successfully with them, to broaden his understanding and to control his impulses better. There is, on a small scale, a progression from the negative to the positive and, on a larger scale, a progression from distant encounters to closer and more

³⁸ When Yorick says 'to invest myself in the character', the reader cannot help wondering whether it is possible for the distance between the observer and the people observed to disappear, whether Sterne's protagonist is capable of feeling without being aware of it, of just living instead of experiencing... but this is not his role.

intense ones, from prejudices to tolerance in the fields of culture and religion, from awkwardness to subtlety in Yorick's relationship with people, and his capacity to feel and translate is heightened and more refined as he goes along. However, this is an open-ended journey, with its equivocal language, its focus on suggestiveness rather than explicitness, its beginning *in medias res*, and ending in aposiopesis. Sterne does not claim to present a model of perfection to the reader, as the intriguing ending proves. The narrator does not bring the narrative threads together, in order to draw to a conclusion. There is no geographical, moralistic, or emotional conclusion to the journey, but there is a forward movement towards an improvement of the self. The traveller, despite his black clothes and his poor health, acquires an appetite and a thirst for life which improves his health and spirits: '— the pleasure of the experiment has kept my senses, and the best part of my blood awake, and laid the gross to sleep' (*ASJ*, p. 115).

On the basis of the arguments established so far, one needs to lay out some of the issues raised about the beginning and the ending of *Tristram Shandy*. The problems that these issues bring up will be dealt with in the following chapter in details.

O ye POWERS! (for powers ye are, and great ones too) — which enable mortal man to tell a story worth the hearing, — that kindly shew him, where he is to begin it, — and where he is to end it, — what he is to put into it, — and what he to leave out, — how much of it he is to cast into shade, — and whereabouts he is to throw his light! (*TS*, III 23, p. 244)

The reader of *Tristram Shandy* is as puzzled as its narrator is about the problems of selection and organisation of narrative material. Defining what constitutes the origin, or the beginning, of the story of *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy* is problematic. The reader searches in vain for the historical landmark he can refer to in his reading, take as a starting point and relate all other events to. Several landmarks could be considered, such as the conception of the mock-hero on which the book opens, or the moment when Tristram's

life in the world actually starts, in volume three. In either case, both Tristram's conception and birth failed beginnings. Alternatively, the point of origin for story could be found in the actions and theories of some of Tristram's ancestors since have a great influence on his life. Moreover, there is a large quantity of text devoted to the description of Tristram's family before his birth and to their dialogues, and little to his own life as a character. However, the structure of the narrative is such that it is not possible to trace one main story line or to concentrate on the development of one set of characters. One could then be tempted to take as a landmark the beginning of the act of narration, when Tristram the pseudo-author starts writing the first page. In a conventional work, the beginning of the fiction should follow the dedication – which is found in volume one, chapter eight in *Tristram Shandy* – or the preface – found in volume three, chapter twenty. Moreover, as Ron Jenkins shows, the time-line of Tristram's pseudo-writings is very close to and could be confounded with that of Sterne's writing of *Tristram Shandy*:

For example, Sterne produced Volumes 1 and 2 on 1 January 1760, while Tristram claims to be writing these volumes on 9 and 26 March 1759; Sterne produced Volumes 5 and 6 on 21 December 1761, while Tristram writes Volume 5, Chapter 17 on 10 August 1761; Sterne produced Volume 9 in January 1767, while Tristram writes Volume 9, Chapter 1 on 12 August 1766.³⁹

Finally, when Tristram mentions his act of creation, it is always in the present tense, the here and now of the act of writing: 'it is no more than a week from this very day, in which I am now writing this book for the edification of the world, --- which is *March 9, 1759*' (*TS*, I 18, p. 51). The book could then be seen as a series of new beginnings, except that stories and comments build up on the pages as the book progresses, which give a before and an after to each 'now'. These problems point to the fact that it impossible to flatten the text

³⁹ Ron Jenkins, 'Mathematical Topology and Gordian Narrative Structure: *Tristram Shandy*', *Mosaic: A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature*, 25:1 (1992), 13-28 (p. 19).

down to one line with two separate and clearly delimited ends (other than the first and the last line of text in the book), a definite origin and conclusion to the story. Although, contrary to *A Sentimental Journey*, *Tristram Shandy* ends with a full stop, the story is not rounded off. No one amongst the characters has achieved anything in particular or reached fulfilment. Instead of having reached the end of a cycle, of a journey, the final recognition of an injustice, or the end of a life, *Tristram Shandy* ends on a point in time which is anterior by four years to the one with which it began, that is, anterior to Tristram's conception. This is what led Jenkins to write:

the solution to a knot depends upon finding its ends. *Tristram Shandy* is a knot without open ends – 'a closed curve in n-space' – which begins before Tristram is born and ends before it begins. As a 'tangled skein', its ends, if they exist at all, are well hidden. Nor is it full of free ends like a plate of spaghetti – a tangle, but not a knot. (Jenkins, p. 25)

The question of the fictional ending of *Tristram Shandy* is directly related to the question of whether Sterne finished writing *Tristram Shandy*. John Charles Berry draws our attention to the fact that 'Sterne planned his novel as a fiction to be written and published in pieces from the very beginning of the text'.⁴⁰ A book published and written for serial publication does not give a complete picture to its readers. Instead, the meaning which comes with completion is deferred by each new instalment and is rendered uncertain. Sterne seems to have used this, along with his narrator's numerous interruptions and strong tendency to digress, in order to destabilise his readers' sense of an ending. It worked so well that it created problems for Sterne's contemporary reviewers of *Tristram Shandy*, who 'had reservations about whether the work was actually over or not when each instalment

⁴⁰ John Charles Berry, *British Serial Production: Author, Audience, Text* (The University of Rochester: University Microfilms International, 1989), p. 85. PhD thesis, order number: 8921667.

appeared' (Berry, p. 95). Berry quotes William Kenrick who writes in the *Monthly Review* (January 1760):

But indeed, Mr. Shandy seems so extremely fond of digressions, and of giving his historical Readers the slip on all occasions, that we are not a little apprehensive he may, sometime or other, give them the slip in good earnest, and leave the work before his story be finished. (Berry, p. 95)

A further point worth noticing, and mentioned by Berry, is the fact that the ninth volume of *Tristram Shandy* ends with a similar sentence to that of all the other volumes: 'The End of the Ninth Volume', which does not clearly point to a more definite ending. Volume four, although it contains an announcement for the next instalment, is the only volume to end on the word: 'FINIS' (*TS*, pp. 809, 402). It is difficult to assess whether this was simple carelessness on Sterne's part, or another game with the reader. A. A. Mendilow is strangely convinced that, if Sterne had had the time to finish his book, it would have been complete. He states: 'had Sterne lived to finish his book, it might theoretically be possible at the end to piece out a full picture of the Shandy menage, possibly even including the hero himself'.⁴¹ For B. H. Lehman the work is a unity, it 'begins and closes on the procreative theme and encloses a world of the living activity that is its consequence'.⁴² Wayne Booth concludes from Sterne's letters that he did complete *Tristram Shandy* according to a rough plan he had in mind when he started writing it:

Sterne said in July, 1766, that he would write one more volume, then write four of *A Sentimental Journey*, then go back to *Tristram Shandy*; in August he said he would write two more volumes first; in September of the following year he swore to write no more Tristrams. It is also perhaps significant that between

⁴¹ A. A. Mendilow, 'The Revolt of Sterne', in *Laurence Sterne: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. by John Traugott (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1968), pp. 90-108 (p. 98).

⁴² B. H. Lehman, 'Of Time, Personality and the Author', in John Traugott ed., *Laurence Sterne: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1968), 21-34 (p. 32).

August 30 and his death he never mentions any possibility of continuation, although he mentions *A Sentimental Journey* frequently.⁴³

The last scene of the book is seen by Booth as a parody of the conventional conclusion with a 'comic éclaircissement' (Booth, p. 537). Moreover, all but the last instalments of the book conclude with chapters concerned primarily with promises for future material. Booth also points to a 'thematic return', as the last chapter resembles the first few chapters of the first volume more so than any other part of the book. Finally, in the last chapter, for the first time in the whole work, he notices that all the major characters are brought together in one room (except Tristram who is not born yet). Samuel Macey goes as far as to suggest that Sterne had 'outlined or even completed the final volume of *Tristram Shandy* before some of the earlier volumes were published', since Sterne's book is 'structured not only by a linear chronology but also by a circular time scheme'.⁴⁴ Martin Price has a different approach to the whole work. He draws a parallel with Baroque art which is composed of a double movement: 'in one direction toward the example of stage design, in the other towards the new celebration of the sketch as opposed to the finished work'.⁴⁵

Kenneth Monkman's research on the publication of *Tristram Shandy* also sheds light on the problem. He found out that volume nine was published in 1767, and was 'the only volume never to be reprinted in London in Sterne's lifetime'.⁴⁶ Sterne not only had fewer

⁴³ Wayne Booth, 'Did Sterne Complete *Tristram Shandy*?', *Modern Philology*, 47:3 (1951), 172-183, in *Tristram Shandy*, ed. by H. Anderson (1980), pp. 532-48 (pp. 535-6). In this article, Booth provides further evidence that Sterne achieved all he wanted to tell by the end of Volume IX of *Tristram Shandy* (pp. 540-4).

⁴⁴ Samuel Macey, 'The Linear and Circular Time-Schemes in Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*', *Notes and Queries*, 36:234:4 (1989), 477-79 (p. 479).

⁴⁵ Martin Price, 'The Art of the Natural', in *To the Palace of Wisdom: Studies in Order and Energy from Dryden to Blake* (New York: Doubleday, 1964), pp. 327-36, in *Tristram Shandy*, ed. by H. Anderson (1980), pp. 562-70 (p. 566).

⁴⁶ Kenneth Monkman, 'The Bibliography of the Early Editions of *Tristram Shandy*', *The Library: Transactions of the Bibliographical Society*, 25:1 (1970), 11-39 (p. 29).

copies printed of volume nine (3500 instead of 4000 for the other volumes), but there were fewer sold:

The first high vogue for *Tristram* had passed. Sterne must have felt this, and he felt also that he had glimpsed new possibilities in the travel sequence he had introduced in volume vii, possibilities which, of course, were to lead to *A Sentimental Journey*. Therefore, instead of the usual two volume instalment, he rounded off *Tristram* with the one, and turned to other things. (ibid.)

Another factor, according to Kenneth Monkman, that may have 'added further to the growing public satiety with Shandyism', is the publication of a spurious instalment of volume nine (Monkman, p. 30).⁴⁷ It appeared 'several months before Sterne came up with the genuine one' and sold 'fairly well, for it ran into a second edition' (Monkman, p. 30). Thus, a combination of factors seems to have contributed to Sterne's having stopped writing *Tristram Shandy* after volume nine. His audience and himself were getting tired of *Tristram Shandy* (at least for a while). He had in mind to write a different kind of book which was published thirteen months after volume nine of *Tristram Shandy*, *A Sentimental Journey*. Volume nine of *Tristram Shandy* appeared in January of 1767, and *A Sentimental Journey* on 27 February 1768. Sterne dies less than three weeks after the publication of *A Sentimental Journey*, on 18 March 1768. Illness and death did not leave him time enough to go back to his previous work and write other volumes, even if he had intended to.

Marcia Allentuck's theory goes further than Price's. She claims that Sterne never intended to complete his book, as his novel belongs to the tradition of the 'non finito', which implies that some unfinished works such as Michelangelo's and Rodin's in painting

⁴⁷ For a study of the spurious volumes of *Tristram Shandy* see: Anne Bandry, 'The Publication of the Spurious Volumes of *Tristram Shandy*', *The Shandean: An Annual Devoted to Laurence Sterne and His Works*, 3 (1991), 126-37.

or sculpture are self-sufficient and perfectly valid aesthetically.⁴⁸ In one of her footnotes, Allentuck presents an interesting summary of the conclusions reached by the members of a symposium on painting and the problem of finishing: 'the panel agreed that what finishes a work of art is the artist's decision to let it alone. The act of creation supersedes the mere product; the work is always finished or never so, only controlled by the artist's imperative to turn to it again' (Allentuck, note 14, p. 155). For her, the question of an ending is 'beside the point': 'indeed, he did not complete it at all. He stopped writing it – another matter altogether. It ceases without concluding' (Allentuck, pp. 148, 152). *Tristram Shandy's* unusual ending points to issues which are beyond the field of literature:

Sterne's refusal to round things off in the usual way is not a mere practical joke. His frustrations and approximations produce comedy, dramatise the problem of knowledge and communication, show the limitations of formal rhetoric, traditional learning and scholarship, and even of the new science and of language itself, and thus set forth the general human situation.⁴⁹

The stories, the narration, seem to stop when the writing stops, and for no reason linked to the plot and the completion of the story. Such an ending is more honest than one which artificially stops when the protagonist is married or dead. Max Byrd comments on the ending:

It is probably idle to ask if Sterne did indeed finish *Tristram Shandy*. Common sense tells us that, although he may have aimed first at concluding with Toby's amours, he might easily have continued in later years with new instalments, new variations on his infinitely adaptable themes: human nature was not likely in the meantime to alter [...] At any point he could have unfrozen the last frame of the novel and set his characters bobbing and talking again across the vast abysses of Walter's drawing-room. (Byrd, pp. 135–36)

⁴⁸ Maria Allentuck, 'In Defence of an Unfinished *Tristram Shandy*', in *The Winged Skull*, ed. by A. H. Cash and John Stedmond (London: Methuen, 1971): pp. 145–59.

⁴⁹ A. D. McKillop, 'The Re-interpretation of Laurence Sterne', *Etudes Anglaises*, 1 (1954), 136–47 (p. 145).

Byrd's statement reinforces that, in *Tristram Shandy*, wherever the writing stops and puts an end to the book, the very nature of the narrative allows further development. His description of the last scene of the novel as having been 'frozen' takes away the permanence of an ending which allows the reader to leave the world of the book behind with a sense of satisfaction and completion. This feeling comes from the knowledge that things are in order, at least in the fictional world. Unfortunately Sterne – if he ever intended to do so – never had a chance to unfreeze his creation as he died less than three weeks after publishing *A Sentimental Journey*. Mendilow offers a quotation from André Gide which retrospectively illustrates the movement against completion found in *Tristram Shandy*:

I consider – writes Gide – that life never presents us with anything which may not be looked upon as a fresh starting point, no less than as a termination. 'Might be continued' – these are the words with which I should like to finish my *Coiners*. (*Time and the Novel*, p. 209)

After having recognised that the beginning and the end of *Tristram Shandy* reflect the complex nature of its narrative composition, one needs to investigate further what the narrator's attitude to completion entails for the novel. In addition, one needs to find out what exactly are the destabilising elements in the text and how they impact on the reader's experience of *Tristram Shandy*. In between the beginning *ab ovo* and the undefined ending, the narrative of *Tristram Shandy* is erratic, fragmented, and polymorphic, so that progression and continuity in time and in space are hard to perceive. The reader is set off balance and has to adopt a different reading process in order to follow and to appreciate the development of the fiction. The study of this journey through *Tristram Shandy*, guided by such an idiosyncratic 'companion' as Tristram, is the subject of the following chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

Tristram Shandy: *the peculiarities of the progression of the narrative*

Samuel Richardson wrote about *Tristram Shandy*:

It is, indeed, a little book, and little is its merit, though great has been the writer's reward! Unaccountable wildness; whimsical digressions; comical incoherencies; uncommon indecencies; all with an air of novelty, has caught the reader's attention [...].¹

Every reader has been struck by the lack of order, the digressions, the time-shifts, the 'wildness' of Sterne's book. Although this chapter tries to find some explanations for its de-stabilising progression and its attitude towards completion, the very nature of the text prevents one from tracing a unique homogeneous pattern or giving definite answers. Sterne's text has an entangled and sometimes inconsistent chronology. As Henri Fluchère explains:

Il n'y a pas dans *Tristram Shandy* de série chronologique développée linéairement, il y a des points fixes entre des séries apparemment indépendantes les unes des autres, dont les fragments peuvent être placés dans un ordre arbitraire, et ce morcellement lui-même ne souffre aucune équidistance, aucune règle de proportion.²

¹ *Selected Letters of Samuel Richardson*, ed. John Carroll (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1964), pp. 341-42, in Laurence Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, ed. by Howard Anderson (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1980), p. 482.

² Henri Fluchère, *Laurence Sterne: de l'homme à l'oeuvre: biographie critique et essai d'interprétation de Tristram Shandy* (Paris: Gallimard, 1961), pp.308-11 (p. 312). See the comprehensive chronology of *Tristram Shandy* in Ron Jenkins, 'Mathematical Topology and Gordian Narrative Structure: *Tristram Shandy*', *Mosaic: A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature*, 25:1 (1992), 13-28 (pp. 16-18). This chronology is an enhanced version of Baird's and Watt's. See Theodore Baird, 'The Time-Scheme of *Tristram Shandy* and a Source', *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, 51 (1936), 803-20; and Ian Watt, Introduction to *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, ed. by Ian Watt (Boston: Houghton

There are references to real historical time such as the conquest of Namur in 1675 and the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713. Yet, there are also falsified references such as that to François IX, who never existed, instead of to Charles IX (*TS*, IV 22, p. 360, III 38, p. 276). *Tristram Shandy* is not a story about some characters guided by a plot which contains the basic temporalities of the characters and the simple chronology of one story line. There are different time-schemes corresponding to various stories belonging to the narrator and also to his characters. The times of consciousness belonging to the narrator, his characters, fictionalised readers and external readers are distinct, they intersect, and they are inter-related. Tristram has a double temporality, as a character and as a pseudo-author. Parallels can be drawn between Tristram's time of writing and Sterne's. The text also encompasses the time of reading the text by different fictionalised readers and by the external reader, as well as space for the reader to interpret and complement the text. In addition, one finds self-reflective text which comments on literary techniques, the production, and the consumption of the book and the various parties involved in it. As a result, there are a great number of words such as 'chapter', 'page', 'heroes', 'writing', 'reading', 'reader', which constantly point to the book as being an object, and sometimes, even, a commodity.

A. A. Mendilow attempts to classify the time-shifts in the first volume of *Tristram Shandy*.³ He shows that the different times mentioned above – the present of the writer who interferes with the story of his characters, that of the reader who is being addressed, the time of the characters which is rendered present in the scenes described, the future intentions of the author, events from the past mentioned in disorder, and the still time in

Mifflin, 1965), pp. vii-xivii. A weaker attempt was made recently by Elizabeth Livingston Davidson, 'Toward an Integrated Chronology for *Tristram Shandy*', *English Language Notes*, 29:4 (1992), 48-56.

³ See the 'Illustration of Sterne's use of the Time-shift' with dates on the side in A. A. Mendilow, *Time and the Novel* (New York: Humanities Press, 1952), pp. 188-93.

which the characters are left in a certain position – all intercross without warning. However, he does not refer to the black page and does not explain how to include it in the time-scheme. Nor does he give a real place in his time-scheme to the comments of the narrator which are supposed to relate to his own life and friends and not to his writing the book or addressing the reader. For instance, Tristram describes Jenny choosing a piece of silk with him; the incident happened to him a week before the time when he is writing about it (*TS*, I 18, p. 51). There is no real opening in Mendilow's time-scheme which would incorporate external documents, or pseudo-documents, which Tristram includes later in his narrative, such as the sermon and the document on baptism. Moreover, if every time Tristram addresses his reader, this counts as 'reader's present', then one needs to account for the time when the female reader has been sent back to read the previous chapter, and Tristram is still addressing an audience in the meantime. Tristram states: 'I have imposed this penance upon the lady, neither out of wantonness or cruelty, but from the best of motives; and therefore shall make her no apology for it when she returns back' (*TS*, I 20). A further example of the inability to classify passages into strict chronological order is, as we saw in chapter one, when the intradiegetical time of the characters overlaps with the extradiegetical time of the narrator (*TS*, IX 17). There are other elements which deny categorisation; amongst which are blanks, outrageous repetitions, misplaced and missing chapters, graphic representations such as a pointing hand, a marbled page, and a squiggle. Moreover, even in a time-scheme which takes into account the time-shifts, it is difficult to include nonsensical paragraphs such as the following, which contains mostly noises and onomatopoeia:

Ptr..r..ing — twing — twang — prut — trut — 'tis a cursed bad fiddle. —
Do you know whether my fiddle's in tune or not? — trut..prut.. — They should
be *fifths*. [...] / Diddle diddle, diddle diddle, diddle diddle — hum — dum —
drum. (*TS*, V 15, pp. 443-4)

Sterne was fully conscious that by creating such a pseudo-author who did not wish to follow any rule, he would face criticism. This, Tristram expresses in volume nine about his decision to leave two chapters blank: 'And here [...] shall I be call'd as many blockheads, numsculs, doddypoies, dunderheads, ninnyhammers, goosecaps, joltheads, nicompoops, and sh--t-a-beds — and other unsavory appellations' (*TS*, IX 25, p. 785).⁴ Sterne has to make sure that his reader will go along with his narrator until he gets used to his way of writing. This is probably why friendship is introduced so early in the book, as an ideal solution to the potential problems of misunderstanding which could arise, since, when the reader has become a friend, 'nothing which has touched [Tristram] will be thought trifling in its nature, or tedious in its telling' (*TS*, I 6, p. 9). Until then,

my dear friend and companion, if you should think me somewhat sparing of my narrative on my first setting out, — bear with me, — and let me go on, and tell my story my own way; — or if I should seem now and then to trifle upon the road, — or should sometimes put on a fool's cap with a bell to it, for a moment or two as we pass along, -- don't fly off, — but rather courteously give me credit for a little more wisdom than appears upon my outside; — and as we jogg on, either laugh with me, or at me, or in short, do any thing, — only keep your temper. (ibid.)

Thus, the demands on Sterne's reader are of a different nature to those of Fielding's reader. In *Tom Jones*, the reader has a companion by his side, and although he must use his discernment in order to understand the plot and the characterisation, the road is fairly straight forward and the narrator takes care of him by providing landmarks, pauses and reminders of past events or characters, so that he does not get lost or confused during his journey through the text. In *Tristram Shandy*, the narrator describes himself as a

⁴ See Anne Bandry's two articles on the reception of *Tristram Shandy*: 'The First Reactions to *Tristram Shandy* in the Oates Collection', *The Shandean: An Annual Devoted to Laurence Sterne and His Works*, 1 (1989), 27-52; and 'Later Reactions to *Tristram Shandy* in the Oates Collection', *The Shandean: An Annual Devoted to Laurence Sterne and His Works*, 2 (1990), 27-44.

multifaceted jester who takes his reader on a destabilising journey. The friendship which Tristram offers is a challenge to the patience of the reader.

Many critics, such as Baird, Watt, Fluchère, and Jenkins, have justly pointed to the fact that the apparently erratic narrative of *Tristram Shandy* is backed up by a very precise chronology. Fluchère and Baird both find a relatively satisfactory order in the dates given and very few errors in the chronology once they have untangled it. For Fluchère, on the whole, dates give a historical dimension to the novel, an air of authenticity. Nevertheless, Fluchère remains well aware of the role of the time of consciousness over clock-time in *Tristram Shandy*, and of the importance of the dates as part of the characters' and the narrator's experience:

L'interdépendance des événements par rapport à quelques points fixes dans le flux du Temps engendre la rassurante pensée d'une commune servitude et d'une sage immobilité dans un univers qui fuit de tous les côtés. (Fluchère, p. 312)

However, the very nature of the narrative makes one puzzle over the comment which introduces Davidson's 'integrated progressive chronology' of *Tristram Shandy*:

A complete and accurate progressive chronology which integrates all of the dates of the novel, both veritable and fictional, would take the reader through the circumstances of the story day-by-day, year-by-year. Such an integrated chronology would not only circumvent Tristram's digressive narrative style, but would reveal layers of suggestion, inconsistency, inversion and default in the novel. (Davidson, p. 52)

Mendilow's remark, after demonstrating how methodical Sterne was with clock-time, follows a parallel reasoning to that of Davidson as he states:

there is scarcely an incident, no matter how slight, no matter where it occurs in the book, no matter how often it is interrupted and taken up again, but falls into its correct place in time in relation to every other incident. Slips in dating are very rare, one or two at most. [...] Every piece in the jig-saw puzzle is found to fit into its place. (*Time and the Novel*, p. 170)

Yet, only taking into account the events or incidents in the book amounts to leaving out more than half of its content, in the form of Tristram's comments, external documents,

graphic devices, blanks, dashes and asterisks. This cannot be an acceptable way of reading *Tristram Shandy*. It would not be possible or enjoyable to take pen and paper and reconstitute the whole chronology of the narrative in order, so that every incident 'falls into its *correct* place in time in relation to every other incident', and one can go along the book and follow 'the circumstances of the story day-by-day, year-by-year' (my italics). Davidson goes even further when she complains about 'Tristram's inability to evaluate circumstances' as he 'mentions *only* the year, 1720, when Bobby dies suddenly' but gives the exact date when Bobby leaves for school, or when Tristram 'fails to date his beloved Uncle Toby's death altogether and [sic] to date Yorick's only indirectly' (Davidson, p. 53). It seems that her perception of the importance of clock-time in the novel needs refining. It should include aspects such as time of consciousness. It also needs to take into account the fact that the narrator plays with his reader, and that dates are important as they form part of the memory and the experience of the characters.

The idea that the reader could improve his understanding and his enjoyment of the novel by reconstituting the chronology of the stories integrally negates the real nature of the text. One can put forward the theory that Sterne counted on the reader's natural inclination to order stories and provided chronological and historical landmarks, not only to give some depth to his characters' consciousness and existence, but also in order to institute a crafty game with him and show him the futility of attempting to understand and appreciate the quality of a work of fiction on the soundness of its use of clock-time. Then, there is no better way to involve as many people as possible in the game but to provide an almost reliable and precise chronology for the critics to play with. The game would not have worked if the labyrinth had not looked interesting and plausible enough. This is what Barthes would qualify as 'jouissance', a text which leaves space for a real game to take

place, where the answers are not given from the start, 'que les jeux ne soient pas faits, qu'il y ait un jeu'.⁵ Tristram himself comically warns us and the inattentive female reader that he writes in order:

to rebuke a vicious taste which has crept into thousands besides herself, — of *reading straight forwards*, more in quest of the adventures, than of the deep erudition and knowledge which a book of this cast, if read over as it should be, would infallibly impart with them. (*TS*, I 20, p. 65, my italics)

As Ron Jenkins aptly remarks, 'a single time-line will not resolve all the tangles of the text', and any analysis which would attempt to extricate the various interdependent threads of the narrative is bound to be reductive and to contain lapses and inconsistencies, even when one concentrates on the time-shifts (Jenkins, p. 19). Lodwick Hartley notes that Sterne's ability to get away from an artificial and restrictive 'unilinear view of experience' in fiction enabled him to 'strike a blow for individualism and freedom worthy of any Romanticist'.⁶ This non-conformism is in fact more honest than the attempt of Sterne's contemporaries to appear as true to life as possible by relating everything to a plot in order to lead the story to its completion. Tristram attracts his reader's attention to the fact that, although the straight line is the much praised symbol of order and regularity, it should not be taken with too much 'gravity', or attract and imprison all the elements of a novel in its limited space. He wonders: 'how was it come to pass, that your men of wit and genius have all along confounded this line, with the line of GRAVITATION' (*TS*, VI 40, p. 572). In that sense, Sterne, via Tristram, does not fool us. He lets the reader know that he is writing a

⁵ Roland Barthes, *Le plaisir du texte* (Paris: Seuil, 1973), p. 11.

⁶ Lodwick Hartley, 'The Genius of Laurence Sterne', from Lodwick Hartley, 'A Chapter of Conclusions', in *Laurence Sterne in the 20th. Century: An Essay and a Bibliography of Sternean Studies 1900-1965* (Chapel Hill: The University Press of North Carolina, 1966), pp. 65-74, reprinted in *Tristram Shandy*, ed. by H. Anderson (1980), pp. 495-501 (p. 500).

work of fiction, which is art, and does not present a direct picture of reality, but rather, as we have seen above, that of a creative mind. This is why, as Joseph Frank puts it:

we do not feel jolted when, at the end of a chapter in a conventional novel, the author asks us to shift our attention to events in a parallel plot line occurring simultaneously with those we have just read about. But we do feel jolted when Tristram Shandy, depicting his mother listening at a door, freezes that particular scene for about ten pages to follow another train of thought and picks it up again when he is done.⁷

This has the result of 'defamiliarizing' the reader who expects to be asked to believe in what is presented to him, and is faced by a work of fiction which does not hide its artificial nature, and thus catches his attention anew: 'l'essence du livre est celle que ses apparences révèlent'.⁸ Bataillon explains how *Tristram Shandy* stands out from its literary background:

Sterne's disturbance of the formal principles of Augustan aesthetics may be seen, then, in part, as the concomitant of a new ontology, defining reality not as the 'Art of God', an objective construct designed by the divine Geometrician and providentially controlled, whose unchanging Order may be rationally apprehended, but as the subjective creation of the human understanding, a world fashioned by the mechanism of the mind imposing on a multiplicity of random sensations an order idiosyncratic, and with reference at least to any conception of truth illusory.

Major questions arise when reading *Tristram Shandy*: how is the journey of the reader through the book possible, and how far his priorities and orientations in reading have to change in order to make him enjoy and benefit from *Tristram Shandy* without getting too confused or bored?

And what of this new book the whole world makes such a rout about ?
— Oh! 'tis out of all plumb, my Lord, — quite an irregular thing! — not one of the angles at the four corners was a right angle. — I had my rule and

⁷ Joseph Frank, 'Spatial Form: Thirty Years After', *Sewanee Review*, 53 (1945), 221-40 (p. 235).

⁸ About Victor Shklovsky's theory of 'defamiliarization', see Victor Shklovsky, 'Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*: Stylistic Commentary', in *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays*, Trans. by Lee Tristram Lemon and Marion J. Reis (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), pp. 25-57.

Serge Soupel, *Apparence et essence dans le roman anglais de 1740 à 1771: l'écriture ambiguë* (Paris: Didier érudition, 1983), p. 200.

compasses, &c. my Lord, in my pocket. — Excellent critic! (TS, III 12, p. 213)

In order to answer these questions, one needs to consider the strong movement against completion found in *Tristram Shandy*. Firstly, Tristram draws an important parallel between writing and living. A story such as *Moll Flanders*, which starts by mentioning the birth of the heroine, can only come full circle with her death. However, since she is the alleged teller of her own life, this is not possible. Defoe uses the introduction of his novel to point to the problem, and he partially solves it with an external voice taking precedence over that of his pseudo-author. Since the narrator of the introduction is different from the protagonist-narrator, he can give an impression of completion by telling the reader about the happy end of Moll's life, the story of which stops when nothing worth telling remains. In *Clarissa*, there is more than one letter writer, so that the death of the protagonists can be reported by other narrators. But in *Tristram Shandy*, Tristram is the only narrator.⁹ Tristram intends to keep on writing and publishing for as long as he lives:

[...] *writing and publishing* two volumes of my life every year; --- which, if I am suffered to go on quietly, and can make a tolerable bargain with my bookseller, I shall continue to do *as long as I live*. (TS, I 14, p. 42)

[...] being determined *as long as I live or write* (*which in my case means the same thing*) [...]. (TS, III 4, p. 191)

This echoes one of Sterne's letters to an unknown correspondent on 21 September 1761, in which one reads: 'I am scribbling away at my Tristram. These two volumes [V and VI] are, I think, the best. — I shall write as long as I live, 'tis, in fact, my hobby-horse'.¹⁰ Tristram

⁹ The presence of a mock-editorial voice in certain footnotes is further dealt with in chapter four of the thesis.

¹⁰ *Letters of Laurence Sterne*, ed. by L. P. Curtis, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1935), p. 143. All further quotations from this edition of the *Letters of Laurence Sterne*, will be referred to in the main text as *Letters*.

also claims that writing may bring him immortality, and that it is only his strong will to tell his story that keeps death at bay:

— O *Garrick!* what a rich scene of this would thy exquisite powers make! and how gladly would I *write* such another *to avail myself of thy immortality, and secure my own behind it.* (*TS*, IV 7, p. 333)

[...] when *DEATH* himself knocked at my door — [my spirits] *bad him come again* [...]. [...] / *Now there is nothing in this world I abominate worse, than to be interrupted in a story* — and I was that moment telling Eugenius a most tawdry one in my way, of a nun who fancied herself a shell-fish [...]. / Thou has had a narrow escape, Tristram, said Eugenius, taking hold of my hand *as I finish'd my story* — (*TS*, VII 1, p. 576, my italics in these quotations, except for people's names)

Anne Bandry points to the parallel between Tristram's comment upon his birth and upon his activity as a writer stressed by the recurrence of the words 'likely' and 'world', which presents his book and his life in such a way that they are both 'irréremédiablement liés et irréconciliable'.¹¹ Tristram explains that, had his parents been more careful when they created him, he is 'verily persuaded [he] should have made a quite different figure in the *world*, from that, in which the reader is *likely* to see [him]' (*TS*, I 1, p. 1); and adds: 'my life and opinions are *likely* to make some noise in the *world*' (*TS*, I 4, p. 5). The fact that living and writing are so closely linked for the narrator of *Tristram Shandy* renders a conventional ending, or even any sense of coming to an end, impossible. The reader cannot be given an ending with the marriage of the protagonist, or with the total portrait of his family, or when Tristram decides he has written enough, since he promises to write for as long as he lives, and his life depends on his writing. It is clear that if the book must end, it must end with the life of its pseudo-author, yet, who can tell of one's own death? Tristram faces an aporia. In his 'Small Account of the Author' prefixed to volume one of *Homer Travestie*, Thomas

¹¹ Anne Bandry, 'Tristram Shandy: un protocole caracolant', *Recherches Anglaises et Nord-Américaines*, 26 (1993), 103-112 (p. 104).

Bridge's character, Mr. Caustic Barebones, comically comments on the eccentricity of Tristram's beginning ab-ovo and on his impossibility as the author of his autobiography to relate his own end:

I have observed, that every writer, who has lately given an account of his life, has taken care to let the world know, that he was born; a circumstance, I believe, few people could have disputed. . . . Agreeable therefore to the fashion, I shall begin with my birth, as no man has a title to write a volume before he was born, but my friend Tristram Shandy; though I think it would not be improper to appoint some friend to write an account of my death, when it happens, to let the world know I am *bona fide*, dead . . .¹²

Secondly, in *Tristram Shandy*, the absence of movement towards completion and the attention paid to the text and its creator point to an unusual phenomenon: that of a narrator who refuses to leave his creation alone. Both in the introduction to *Moll Flanders* and in *Tom Jones*, where there the narrators are addressing an audience, when the cycle is complete, the reader is told that the journey has come to an end and that they must part, hoping that he has learnt something and enjoyed it. Swift's narrator also parts with his reader in the conclusion of *A Tale of a Tub*, requesting indulgence for his book. He wishes to part in a concise way, so that the 'Ceremony of taking Leave' does not employ 'more Time than the whole Conversation before' (*Tale*, p. 208). The parting in *A Tale of a Tub* is not clear-cut, though, since Swift's narrator presents it as a 'pause', rather than as definite end: 'Therefore, I shall here pause awhile, till I find, by feeling the World's Pulse, and my own, that it will be of absolute Necessity for us both, to resume my Pen' (*Tale*, p. 210). In *Tristram Shandy*, instead of finding warnings that the story is drawing to its conclusion, the narrator expresses the wish many times in the novel to continue writing his book for as long

¹² Thomas Bridge, *Homer Travestie: Being a New Burlesque Translation of the Ten First Books of the Iliad. [...] To which is Prefixed, Some small Account of the Author*, (London: Printed for S. Hooper, in the Strand, 1764), pp. 1-2. Oates 443-444, in Anne Bandry, 'The First Reactions to *Tristram Shandy*...', p. 42.

as he lives. It seems that he does not want to disappear behind a finished product which can be left alone and does not require him anymore when it becomes an entity in itself:

Produire une fiction achevée, c'est pour celui qui l'écrit accepter le risque de la voir se substituer à lui [...]. Le mot fin, hors-texte, sanctionne la retombée de la parole qui, en un autre temps, et dans un autre lieu que celui de la lecture, tenta de se loger dans le texte. 'Le dire reste oublié derrière le dit' [...].¹³

Sterne presents *Tristram Shandy* as an excrescence of its narrator rather than as a detached product. The temporality and the life-expectation of the creator and of his creation are fused, which endows the work both with a unique vitality and with the constant fear that death, rather than a pre-planned fictional decision to round off the story, can put a sudden end to it. Henri Fluchère points to the special relationship which exists between the work and its pseudo-creator:

Phénomène nouveau: celui de l'écrivain qui se confond avec son oeuvre, à la fois dans la substance et dans le temps, pour qui une oeuvre n'est pas une chose objective, parfaite, achevée, destinée à se séparer de lui comme la créature se sépare de son créateur, mais une matière vivante, inscrite dans sa propre durée. (Fluchère, p. 226)

In fact, as the whole of volume seven illustrates, death can be seen as a sort of negative energy which keeps the narrator going and gives him his taste for life, as well as giving its unique dynamic rhythm and tone to the book. Therefore, a lot of effort is invested in keeping the story open to expansion. There is, for instance, a regular inclusion of material from contemporary periodicals, and from what happens in the world around Sterne in his time. They constantly offer matter for thought and story writing material anew.¹⁴ John Charles Berry also reminds us that,

¹³ Alain Bony, 'Terminologie chez Sterne', *Poétique*, 29 (1977), 28-49 (p. 30).

¹⁴ See Morris Golden, 'Periodical Context in the Imagined World of *Tristram Shandy*', *The Age of Johnson: A Scholarly Annual*, 1 (1987), 237-60. The topics often found in periodicals at the time include wars and defences, the latest medical theories, fecundation, education, courtship, marriage and death. The periodicals are, for example: *The York Courant*, the *London Chronicle*, the *London Magazine*, the *Scots Magazine*, the *Universal Chronicle*, the *London Evening Post*, the *Literary Magazine*, the *Gentleman's Magazine*, the *Monthly Review*, the *World*, and the *Connoisseur*.

serial production allows the reader to contact the author before the text is completely published, and, in the case of most serial authors, before the text is completely written. This new type of interaction creates an entirely new dynamic in the relationship between an author and the audience. [...] In some cases the letters actually change the text itself.¹⁵

Rather than simply modifying certain aspects of his narrative according to the comments made by his readers and critics as Richardson did, Sterne has his narrator reacting to these comments in the narrative itself. For instance, the second instalment of *Tristram Shandy* contains compliments to Reynolds who painted Sterne three times in the 1760s, and to his 'dear friend Garrick' the actor (*TS*, III 2, p. 188, III 24, p. 246). It also mentions the fact that Sterne refused the literary advice that the Bishop of Gloucester, William Warburton, offered him (*TS*, IV 20, p. 357). Volume three offers some direct response to Sterne's critics after the publication of two volumes of his sermons in May 1760, and to the reserves expressed by his contemporaries about the 'Memoire' on baptism in the womb found in the first volume of *Tristram Shandy*:

— You Messrs. the monthly Reviewers! — how could you cut and slash my jerkin as you did? — how did you know, but you would cut my lining too? [...] only next month, if any one of you should gnash his teeth, and storm and rage at me, as some of you did last MAY, [...] don't be exasperated, if I pass it by again with good temper [...]. (*TS*, III 4, p. 190-1)

As the genuineness of the consultation of the *Sorbonne* upon the question of baptism, was doubted by some, and denied by others, — 'twas thought proper to print the original of this excommunication. (Footnote, *TS*, III 11, p. 202)

The external criticism of the book and its author is fictionalised and, printed alongside, there is the narrator's reaction to it as a *mise en abyme* of the narrative. In addition,

¹⁵ John Charles Berry, *British Serial Production: Author, Audience, Text* (The University of Rochester: University Microfilms International, 1989), p. 3. PhD thesis, order number: 8921667. Richardson's *Clarissa* was also published in instalments, but Berry notices that he did not write the book 'with serialization in mind' (Berry, p. 35). It was only after a full manuscript had been completed that he decided to publish it in this way. The subsequent revisions and editions of *Clarissa* then saw the text being altered according to the reception it received.

discussions on the sciences, religious matters, the arts (painting, music, rhetoric, fiction writing), and on the characteristics of human beings, cannot be settled once and for all, so they are a good source of never-ending parody. Moreover, Sterne's borrowings and imitation of the structure, matter and tone of numerous authors creates complex arrangements, 'as during the reading of Ernulphus when Tristram makes a Burtonian oath and a Benengelian wager to affirm the Cervantic contrast between Slop's reading and Toby's whistling'.¹⁶ The extensive web of connections between literary works found in *Tristram Shandy* establishes a continuity in time and in space which overrides the gap between actual separate books, written in different periods, in various parts of Europe, with different styles and purposes. Thus, the intertextual literary material which converges in the book can be used, arranged and modified at will, providing the narrator with another endless tool for expansion. Karl also mentions the associations in *Tristram Shandy*, which are 'infinite, attached only to the energies of the creator'. When comparing the time sequencing to a set of Chinese boxes, he states: 'Possibilities are, like points of vantage, infinite; the novel may end, but it does not have to – ever'.¹⁷ Tristram's grandiloquence manifests itself, for instance, with the story of the military campaigns. He discusses the 'conveniences and inconveniences' of part of the battlefield on the vegetable garden, which:

will be considered at large in the history of my uncle *Toby's* and the corporal's campaigns, of which, this I'm now writing is but a sketch, and will be finished [...] in three pages [...] — The campaigns themselves will take up as many books; [...] surely they had better be printed apart, — we'll consider the affair — so take the following sketch of them in the mean time. (*TS*, VI 21, pp. 535-6)

¹⁶ For the treatment of the complexity of Sterne's system of imitation see Jonathan Lamb, 'Sterne's System of Imitation', *Modern Language Review*, 76 (1981), 794-810 (p. 802).

¹⁷ Frederick Karl, *A Reader's Guide to the Development of the English Novel of the Eighteenth Century* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1975), p. 335.

William Holtz takes this technique further by relating it to Sterne's poor health, through Tristram, and he concludes:

what form could better suit a writer likely to die at any day during its composition than one that, by its own inner principle, is as nearly complete at one stage as another, yet is capable of indefinite extension? And this same form, by virtue of its effective denial of time, serves to objectify the sense of identity that time constantly mocks and that death must finally obliterate.¹⁸

Tristram's thirst for expansion and inclusiveness can be found in Sterne who, when he started writing the first volume of *Tristram Shandy*, had vast plans for his creation which, however, he did not fully exploit. For instance, in his letter to Robert Dodsley dated May 23, 1759 which accompanied volume one, he states: 'The Plan is a most extensive one, — taking in, not only, the Weak part of the Sciences, in w^{ch} the true point of Ridicule lies — but every Thing else, which I find Laugh-at-able in my way—' (*Letters*, p. 74). In a later letter to an acquaintance (June 1759), Sterne describes the design of his work which is 'to take in all Ranks and Professions, and to laugh them out of their Absurdities'.¹⁹

Thirdly, the narrator of *Tristram Shandy* leaves open threads which work against completion. On the one hand, for example, despite being a story allegedly written 'backward from the present', the plot of *Moll Flanders* is almost completely devoid of projections in the future and of suspense on a large scale (*Time and the Novel*, p. 107). On the other hand, the text of *Tom Jones* contains references to minor characters, and a multitude of hints and clues which are eventually taken up in the story line. They are strategic tools in the development of the plot and in the denouement. However, in *Tristram Shandy*, many topics are promised to the reader and never developed. Allusions to 'my

¹⁸ William Holtz, *Image and Immortality, A Study of Tristram Shandy* (Providence, RI: Brown UP, 1970), p. 147.

¹⁹ Wilbur L. Cross, *Works* (New York: J. F. Taylor & Co., 1904), IV: 26-28, in *TS*, editors' introduction, vol. II, p. 818.

dear, dear *Jenny*', for instance, are scattered throughout the book (*TS*, I 18, p. 51). Yet, her story never gets told, and this, in spite of the narrator's promises: 'but who my *Jenny* is [...] it shall be told you the next chapter but one, to my chapter of button-holes, — and not one chapter before' (*TS*, IV 32, p. 401). Tristram falsely assures the reader that 'a most delectable narrative will be given in the progress of this work', that of his travels through Europe as a governor to Mr. Noddy's eldest son (*TS*, I 11, p. 26). The map of the midwife's parish which was to be 'added to the end of the twentieth volume [...] by way of commentary, scholium, illustration, and key to such passages, incidents, or innuendoes as shall be thought to be either of private interpretation, or of dark or doubtful meaning' was never engraved (*TS*, I 13, p. 40). Walter's *Tristra-paedia* was never published (*TS*, V 35, p. 474). Finally, Tristram guarantees in vain that he will explain how it comes that the pose of the Corporal takes to deliver the sermon is so geometrically precise:

whether it was chance or nature, or good sense of imitation, &c. shall be commented upon in that part of this *cyclopædia of arts and sciences*, where the instrumental parts of the eloquence of the senate, the pulpit, the bar, the coffee-house, the bed-chamber, and fire-side, fall under consideration. (*TS*, II 17, p. 141, *my italics*)

Tristram's own definition of his work as a 'cyclopædia' confirms his will to write a work of a great scale which can swallow any material in its hunger for expansion. He seems to have inherited his frenzy for compendiums, folios, and digests from his father, a great admirer of Ernulfus and Slawkenbergius.²⁰ This passage can also be read as a self-parody, a way of satirising the encyclopaedic form dear to the eighteenth century which hopes to contain all knowledge. The narrator's unkept promises are another major de-stabilising element of the book. The stories mentioned above, for instance, are presented as interesting

²⁰ For a reading of *Tristram Shandy* as a Menippean Satire, see Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1957), pp. 308-9.

and important to the narrative. In the first two volumes, Tristram makes announcements of stories he wants to tell at the end of about eleven chapters out of forty-four. Announcements have the effect of opening the reader's mind and imagination to future and exciting material, but in *Tristram Shandy* what is going to happen next is promised, delayed, and thwarted. The reader is teased and kept in suspense, and eventually sent back to his own expectations, only to find out that they are misplaced in the reading of this particular book. The notion of suspense, essential to a narrative which tends to a denouement, is played with, distorted and partially destroyed. These allusions to stories which are never told are 'leurrés' and they frustrate the reader's expectations because they do not fulfil the need they created in him in the first place.²¹ Because 'leurrés' are quite numerous in *Tristram Shandy*, especially in the first two volumes, there comes a point where the reader gets used to Tristram's promises not being fulfilled. Progressively, snares produce the opposite effect to that for which they were meant: they come to be accepted as the norm. Then, when the promised stories do get told, it come as a surprise. The reader's doubts are deceived, and what he believed to be snares become for him false snares, instead of real announcements. This is an example of how Sterne, through Tristram, playfully manipulates his reading audience. He destabilises the reader by misusing the norms of suspense and the expectations the reader has when reading a work of fiction, in particular that of a reliable narrator. Fielding's narrator claims that he wants his reader to go along with him through the text like 'Fellow-Travellers in a Stage-Coach', but he is much more openly and straightforwardly in control of his narrative than Tristram pretends to be (*TJ*, XVIII 1, p. 913). In *Tom Jones*, the reader has a strong active role to play in deciphering the

²¹ Gérard Genette, *Nouveau Discours du Récit* (Paris: Seuil, 1983), p. 114.

narrator's irony and in forecasting the actions of the characters from the clues he is given.

The narrator explains to his reader:

thou art highly mistaken if thou dost imagine that we intended, when we began this great Work, to leave thy Sagacity nothing to do or that, without sometimes exercising this Talent, thou wilt be able to travel through our Pages with any Pleasure or Profit to thyself. (*TJ*, XI 9, p. 614)

At the same time, the reader knows that he can trust the narrator who is the master of ceremony in charge of the actual construction, structure and outcome of the story. The places of the narrator-author and of the reader are firmly established. There is, of course, in *Tristram Shandy*, scope for the reader's imagination to develop. In fact, one can see that, without the mind of the reader to play with actively, Tristram's tricks, bawdy innuendoes, and asterisks would be pointless. As Byrd points out, 'with Sterne, the joke lies entirely in manipulating us to say it for him'²². Chapters eight, nine, eleven and seventeen of volume two particularly stress the importance of the reader's imagination with a concentration of the words 'reader' (or 'his', which refers to the reader), 'imagination' and the imperative 'imagine' addressed to the reader. One reads, for example, 'prepared the reader's imagination for the entrance of Doctor Slop upon the stage', 'Imagine to yourself', 'Imagine to yourself' (p. 120); 'Imagine such a one', 'Imagine to yourself' (p. 121); 'leave him something to imagine' (p. 125); 'to keep his imagination as busy as my own', 'his imagination must now go on with it for a while', 'let the reader imagine', 'Let him imagine', 'let him imagine' (p. 126); 'otherwise he will naturally stand represented, by your imagination, in an uneasy posture' (p. 140). On the one hand, Tristram gives his readers tasks to do which should belong to the author. These include shutting the door behind him, painting the portrait of widow Wadman, and getting his characters off the stairs (*TS*, I 4, p.

²² Max Byrd, *Tristram Shandy* (London: Unwin Critical Library, 1988), p. 33.

6, VI 38, p. 566, IV 13, p. 343). He also advocates a possible friendship beyond the book (*TS*, I 6, p. 9). On the other hand, he holds onto the narrative in a possessive way, as he claims: 'if I thought you was able to form the least judgement or probable conjecture to yourself, of what was to come in the next page, — I would tear it out of my book' (*TS*, I 25, p. 89). So, at the end of the second volume, which is also the end of the first publication of *Tristram Shandy*, the pseudo-author plays with the rules of suspense and encourages his readers to wait eagerly until the next volumes are published:

whilst your imagination is in motion, you may encourage it to go on, and discover by what causes and effects in nature it could come to pass, that my uncle *Toby* got his modesty by the wound he received upon his groin.— You may raise a system to account for the loss of my nose by marriage articles, — and shew the world how it could happen, that I should have the misfortune to be called TRISTRAM, in opposition to my father's hypothesis, and the wish of the whole family [...].— These, with fifty other points left yet unravelled, you may endeavour to solve if you have time; — but I tell you before-hand it will be in vain, — for the sage *Alquife*, the magician in *Don Belianis of Greece*, nor the no less famous *Urganda*, the sorceress his wife, (were they alive) could pretend to come within a league of the truth.

The reader will be content to wait for a full explanation of these matters till the next year, — when a series of things will be laid open which he little expects. (*TS*, II 19, pp. 180-1)

The quotation is very revealing of the tantalising spirit of the narrator towards his readers who are pushed to make an effort to participate in the construction of the text, but who are told on the other hand that, even if they were endowed with divinatory powers, they would not be able to guess the outcome of the episodes mentioned. This is the device of suspense used in serial publication in order to:

put the reader in a state of uncertainty [...which] leads the reader to think about the latest events in light of past instalments and then to predict the outcome of the novel. This action [...] turns him into an agent of the author, who uses him to bind the various instalments of the novel together. It is the binding aspect of the reader's participation that makes serial narrative manipulative. (Berry, p. 18)

The device of suspense is there, the anxiety for what follows is powerfully created in the reader, but the device is exposed, laid bare as a device. With a certain amount of pride,

Tristram makes it clear from the first volume onwards that he is the indispensable narrator who has the key to the text. He plainly states that one can only have the knowledge searched for by reading him further: 'I take my leave of you till this time twelve-months, when [...] I'll have another pluck at your beards, and lay open a story to the world you little dream of' (*TS*, IV 32, p. 402). One realises more fully that even if a work of fiction involves the reader's imagination and intelligence in order to configure the words on the page, the involvement is limited by the fact that the work has already been written before the reader picks up the book. This is hidden from the reader in narratives such as *Clarissa*, which rely efficiently on the effect of suspense and on the empathy with the characters, both of which create a feeling of thirst and anxiety in the reader for what happens next. When one takes into account the tone and the organisation of the whole narrative, another question arises: why would Sterne give a traditional and well-rounded ending to his novel if, through Tristram, he tries to teach his reading audience how to read differently, to change its expectations, to challenge its intelligence, its memory and its patience? In his treatment of comic suspense in the episode of Phutatorius and the chestnut, Peter Briggs points to Sterne's tantalising game with the reader:

What we are witnessing here is not simply narrative suspension but interpretive suspension; Sterne deliberately withheld those facts which could allow us to interpret Phutatorius' exclamation quickly and correctly, and instead, leads us a merry chase through erroneous opinions, irrelevant inquiries, digressive backgrounds, melodramatic psychologies, and so on. This is a good comic technique, of course; it serves to insulate us from Phutatorius' pain and prepares us to laugh at him. But Sterne was also playing with our anxiousness to interpret what is happening, deliberately frustrating and misleading us, causing us to cast and recast our notions of what transpired.²³

²³ Peter Briggs, 'Locke's *Essays* and the Tentativeness of *Tristram Shandy*', *Studies in Philology*, 82 (1985), 494-517, reprinted in *Critical Essays on Laurence Sterne*, ed. by Melvyn New (New York: G.K. Hall, London: Prentice Hall, 1998), pp. 87-109 (pp. 101-02).

There is a re-positioning of the role of the reader in *Tristram Shandy*. Sterne's work is not just a comic response to *Tom Jones*'s model of reading as conversation in a stagecoach; it poses the problem of control and authority over the text. The game of tantalisation in *Tristram Shandy* has the double effect of pricking the intelligence and the curiosity of the reader into active thinking, through the ambiguities of language, the blanks in the text and the feeling of open-endedness of the book, and of annoying him at the same time by reminding him that he is mainly a receptive audience to the work of fiction. It is harder to abandon oneself to an unreliable narrator than it is to a trustworthy one, and yet the unpredictability of the text of *Tristram Shandy* and the eccentric nature of its pseudo-author necessitate to 'let go' all the more, as logic and deduction can be of very little help in finding one's way through the book.

This is why it is tempting to suggest that the problem of the end can be different according to the nature of the reader and to his various feelings and reactions to passages such as the one which concludes the first two instalments. In *Tristram Shandy*, the end of the book may depend more on the determination and stamina of the reader than on the author's act of concluding the story. One might establish categories of readers for this purpose. Swift, before Sterne, describes how his readers are bound to react to his work according to their category:

Readers may be divided into three Classes — the *Superficial*, the *Ignorant*, and the *Learned*: And I have with much Felicity fitted my Pen to the Genius and Advantage of each. The *Superficial* Reader will be strangely provoked to *Laughter*; which clears the Breast and the Lungs, is Sovereign against the *Spleen*, and the most innocent of all *Diureticks*. The *Ignorant* Reader (between whom and the former the distinction is extremely nice) will find himself disposed to *Stare*; which is an admirable Remedy for ill Eyes, serves to raise and enliven the Spirits, and wonderfully helps *Perspiration*. But the reader truly *Learned*, chiefly for whose Benefit I wake, when others sleep, and sleep when others wake, will here find sufficient Matter to employ his Speculations for the rest of his Life. (*Tale*, pp. 184-5)

In *Tristram Shandy*, the 'hypercritick' may experience frustration and impatience and put an end to his reading very rapidly (*TS*, II 8, p. 119); but Tristram makes it clear: '☞ mark only, — I write not for them' (*TS*, III 20, p. 238). The gullible reader may feel that he can trust Tristram, and that the only way to go along is to put himself into the hands of the master of ceremony. He will be disappointed and at a loss as soon as he finds out that Tristram does not solve many of the questions he raises, and, if he solves some, it is certainly not in the expected manner. The competitive reader will enter the challenge and play the game offered despite Tristram's warning: he may be caught by the aposiopeses and the nonsensical passages. The curious reader may impatiently wait for the next publication and go beyond his frustrations in order to see what the book has to offer. He may find his way through the narrative and experience some gratification, depending on the nature of his curiosity. The narrator writes for him:

— My way is ever to point out to the curious, different tracts of investigation, to come at the first springs of the events I tell; — not with a pedantic *Fescue*, — or in the decisive Manner of *Tacitus*, who outwits himself and his reader; — but with the officious humility of a heart devoted to the assistance merely of the inquisitive; -- to them I write, — and by them I shall be read, — if any such reading as this could be supposed to hold out so long, to the very end of the world. (*TS*, I 21, p. 74)

As one cannot possibly take what Tristram says at face value, especially when he claims that he writes 'with the officious humility of a heart devoted to the assistance merely of the inquisitive'. The curious reader may then have to be endowed also with a sense of humour and the necessary wit and judgement to allow him a certain detachment from the text and its narrator, mixed with an appreciation for the work, in order to enjoy his reading, no matter how it develops and ends. Shifting the problem of the ending from the author to the reader does not solve it, but, in a book which gives so much importance to its audience and

raises so many problems in its reading, it is an angle worth consideration.²⁴ In his analysis of the relationship between Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) and *Tristram Shandy*, Peter Briggs develops a theory which shifts the problem of the ending towards the act of reading, rather than that of writing. Briggs believes that the main difference between Locke and Sterne lies in the fact that, for Locke, 'empirical reason – reason conjoined with available facts – stands as the final arbiter, both in the management of one's mind and in the conduct of the shared world' (Briggs, p. 103). He explains that there is no final arbiter in Sterne, 'which is why the world will continue to appear to the mind in terms of appositions' (ibid.). Thus reason, but also 'sympathetic feelings, comic whimsy or creative imagination' have 'a legitimate though partial claim to interpret experience' (ibid.). For Briggs, the fact that formalistic ideas of narrative rest upon the assumptions that 'narrative action does indeed have a shape, that coherent meanings can be encompassed by such shapes, and that different readers can arrive at a common appreciation of such literary shapeliness and its implications' is challenged by 'a shandean aesthetic founded upon the inevitability of unending appositions' (Briggs, p. 105). If 'to possess 'understanding' in the shandean sense is to possess interpretative options' (Briggs, p. 103); if 'the powers of the mind are themselves in apposition and understanding is finally only apposite', then 'the artistic forms which would express understanding must be similarly apposite, tentative, and forever unfinished' (Briggs, p. 105). Briggs concludes that 'a well-formed work does not offer "conclusions" but coherent *options* for interpretation' (ibid.). The issue of interpretation and the game of perspectives is crucial to the challenging

²⁴ Problems of completion and closure remain. See David Peter Sloboda, *Ending or Exhaustion: Closure and Hypertextual Fiction* (MA thesis, Dalhousie University, Canada, 1994). Sloboda mentions Sterne, Joyce and Borges as ancestors of hypertextual narratives because of their use of their text 'as a labyrinth which overwhelms the reader'.

relationship between author and reader, but it is also a key element of the structure of the narrative of *Tristram Shandy*, a book which concentrates on discussing opinions, and which is far from offering a traditional opening and a conclusion to one particular story.

In addition to the movement against completion, the narrator of *Tristram Shandy* displays a paradoxical attitude towards progression. As in *Clarissa*, writing and living are often paralleled in *Tristram Shandy*, but whereas in Richardson's book they are harmoniously combined, in Sterne's they are mostly made to compete with each other. The narrator is often putting into words his struggle to catch up the speed of life with his writings, in vain, since writing always takes more time than living. As Alain Bony explains, 'la fin du livre s'éloigne à mesure que l'écriture avance' (Bony, p. 34). Thus, Tristram proudly and comically explains that he is facing a new dilemma which no other 'biographical writer' before him experienced:

I am this month one whole year older than I was this time twelve-months; and having got, as you perceive, almost into the middle of my fourth volume — and no farther than to my first day's life — 'tis demonstrative that I have three hundred and sixty-four days more life to write just now, than when I first set out; so that instead of advancing, as a common writer, in my work with what I have been doing at it — on the contrary, I am just thrown so many volumes back — was every day of my life to be as busy a day as this [...] at this rate I should just live 364 times faster than I should write [...]. (*TS*, IV 13, pp. 341-42)

If Defoe devotes about five pages of text to one year of Moll's life, and Fielding eleven pages to a day of Tom's adventures, Sterne, on and off, and amongst many other topics, devotes three volumes to one day: the birth of his mock-hero. In the same way as Tristram the protagonist grows into a lad before his father can write his treaty of education, the *Tristrapœdia*, the quest of Tristram the narrator is doomed to fail (*TS*, V 16). Thus, the narrator expresses a feeling of panic on several occasions: '— Pray what was that man's name, --- for I write in such a hurry, I have no time to recollect or look for it' (*TS*, I 21, p. 71). He gets confused when he realises that he promised to write a great number of

chapters, expresses his gratitude that his father saved him from writing a chapter on chance, remembers that he has already written his chapter on noses, and promises to finish his chapter upon chapters before he goes to sleep. Still, the task is beyond him, and he exclaims: 'by my great grandfather's whiskers, I shall never get half of 'em through this year' (*TS*, IV 9, p. 335). However, it is common for Tristram to express a feeling of panic and yet to go on leisurely with a digression which takes him further away from what he was aiming at:

I am so impatient to return to my own story, that what remains of young *Le Fever's*, that is, from this turn of his fortune, to the time my uncle *Toby* recommended him for my preceptor, shall be told in a very few words, in the next chapter. — All that is necessary to be added to this chapter is as follows. (*TS*, VI 11, p. 513)

Here the narrator succinctly enumerates what happened at the death of *Le Fever*, but then he is side-tracked by his wish to comment on *Yorick's* funeral's sermon for the rest of the chapter. The reader also finds sudden jerks and changes in the narrative line without transition as if there were a loss of control:

[...] A sudden impulse comes across me — drop the curtain, *Shandy* — I drop it — Strike a line here across the paper, *Tristram* — I strike it — and hey for a new chapter! / [...] is a man to follow rules — or rules to follow him? (*TS*, IV 10, pp. 336-37)

But, rather than showing a loss of control, this passage, and many others like it, illustrate Tristram's constant, deliberate defiance of narratives which follow a straight line. In fact, the main progression of stories is arranged in a way that shows some control and even, comically, a great deal of pride in narrative mastery on the narrator's part. For instance, when Tristram mentions *Slawkenbergius* in volume three, chapter thirty-five, he firmly states: 'of which I shall have much to say by and bye, — I will say nothing now' (*TS*, III 35, p. 267). He then paves the way very carefully before presenting *Slawkenbergius'* tale at the beginning of volume four. Almost every chapter from volume three, chapter thirty-five

up to the tale contains a reference to Slawkenbergius as well as elements meant to arouse curiosity and to increase the importance of the tale. This creates comedy and ridicules the building up of suspense which is reserved for important events and serious and moralistic topics in traditional narratives. Here we are faced with an author who shows control and who prepares his readers with great care and emphasis for a tale on noses! What is more, changes in the narrative line do not happen at the expense of the narrator. Tristram is a self-conscious narrator who often takes great care to justify his narrative choices – whether his arguments are plausible:

The story of that [the blow Toby received], Madam, is long and interesting; ---- but it would be running my history all upon heaps to give it you here. — 'Tis for an episode hereafter; and every circumstance relating to it in its proper place, shall be faithfully laid before you: ---- 'Till then, it is not in my power to give further light into the matter, or say more than what I have said already [...]. (TS, I 21, p. 75)

or whimsical:

I have a strong propensity in me to begin this chapter very nonsensically, and I will not balk my fancy. (TS, I 23, p. 82)

Many passages in the book show that Sterne, who was ill, paints a narrator who is, in his turn, fighting against illness and death.²⁵ Tristram has to face the usual difficulties in building his fictional work, but he also has to face 'debt', unsold volumes on his hands, a 'vile asthma' and fits of haemorrhage (TS, VIII 6, p. 663). Even though he manages to fly from death in volume seven, the book is tinted with his anxiety at not being able to carry on with his narrative: '— for I have forty volumes to write, and forty thousand things to say and do, which no body in the world will say and do for me' (TS, VII 1, p. 576). Tristram

²⁵ The editors of the Florida edition of *Tristram Shandy* remind us that 'the notion that [Sterne] could continue his pace of two volumes every year was now being seriously threatened by the reality of his ill health. Just after seeing volumes V and VI through the press he had "broke a vessel" in his lungs (*Letters*, p. 150); [...] in May he had again collapsed' (TS, editors' introduction, vol. II, p. 827).

stresses the gap between some authors and himself. He writes to be famous, but above all, to be fed. For instance, he mentions the archbishop of Benevento who took forty years to write a very thin book, as he lay 'under the impuissance [...] of advancing above a line and an half in the compass of a whole summer's day' because he was convinced that 'his first thoughts were always the temptation of the evil one' (*TS*, V 16, p. 446-7). Tristram puzzles over this slow achievement and adds that he tells this story 'for the encouragement of those few in it [the world], who write not so much to be fed — as to be famous' (*ibid.*, p. 446). This confirms his early statement and accentuates the stress he is supposed to be under to write as fast as he can: '— It is not half an hour ago, when (in the great hurry and precipitation of a poor devil's writing for daily bread) I threw a fair sheet [...] into the fire, instead of the foul one' (*TS*, IV 17, pp. 349-50).²⁶ Yet, at the same time, he has a strong tendency to give himself more tasks than he can cope with: 'I have but half a score of things to do in the time — I have a thing to name — a thing to lament — a thing to hope' (*TS*, IV 32, p. 400); or again:

whether the interjection was levelled at *Susannah*, or the button-hole, — whether pish was an interjection of contempt or an interjection of modesty, is a doubt, and must be a doubt till I shall have time to write the three following favorite chapters, that is, my chapter of *chamber-maids* — my chapter of *pishes*, and my chapter of *button-holes*. (*TS*, IV 14, p. 345)

The vast quantity of topics Tristram feels he has to deal with appears to be self-inflicted rather than suffered, as Tristram expresses tragi-comically in the following interjection:

one would think I took a pleasure in running into difficulties of this kind, merely to make fresh experiments of getting out of 'em [...] What! are not the unavoidable distresses with which, as an author and a man, thou art hemm'd in

²⁶ These quotations from *Tristram Shandy*, in my opinion, contradict the passage in Sterne's letter to Dr*****, 30 January 1760: 'I wrote not [to] be fed but to be famous', which is often mistakenly attributed to Tristram (*Letters*, p. 90). This quotation, Curtis stresses in a note p. 92, is itself derived from Colley Cibber's 'I wrote more to be Fed, than to be Famous'.

on every side of thee — are they, Tristram, not sufficient, but thou must entangle thyself still more? (*TS*, VIII 6, p. 663)

This game shows the 'hypercritick' that the time of the narrative is Tristram's from the start to play with (*TS*, II 8, p. 119). As he is the creator of the time of a fictitious narrative, he can allow himself to expand it, to make the reader feel that he is in a hurry because he is short of time, and even to make himself short of it on purpose, for the pleasure of showing that he can extricate himself skilfully from a difficult situation. He can then conclude comically: 'such a head! — would to heaven! my enemies only saw the inside of it' (*TS*, III 38, p. 278). Moreover, many of Tristram's urgent duties, which he delights in listing, such as the ones about 'pishes' above, appear trifling to any writer or reader. These duties comically prove the talent of a writer who can attract and maintain his reader's interest with such trivial topics. This is what the author of *Yorick's Meditations*, a work inspired by the first instalment of *Tristram Shandy*, bitterly comments upon in his first Meditation, 'upon Nothing':

This same nothing has been of great service to many an author, I could mention one that has lately filled two whole volumes with nothing; the books vastly dear; but what does it contain? why just nothing, and that proves the author's abilities, any blockhead could write if he had something to say for himself; but he that can write upon nothing must surely be a superlative genius.²⁷

Swift satirises the modern authors of his time in the same way in his Conclusion:

I am now trying an Experiment very frequent among Modern Authors; which is, to *write upon Nothing*; When the Subject is utterly exhausted, to let the Pen still move on; by some called Ghost of Wit, delighting to walk after the Death of its Body. And to say the Truth, there seems to be no Part of Knowledge in fewer Hands than That of Discerning *when to have Done*. (*Tale*, p. 208)

²⁷ *Yorick's Meditations upon Various Interesting and Important Subjects*, (London: Printed for R. Stevens, at Pope's-Head, in Pater-Noster-Row, 1760), p. 3, in Oates 432, UCL: CCE.5.58, Sterneiana IV, in Anne Bandry, 'The First Reactions to *Tristram Shandy*...', p. 35. See also H. Fielding, 'An Essay on Nothing', in *Miscellanies*, ed. H. K. Miller (1743; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), pp. 186-7, quoted in *Appearance et essence*..., p. 290: 'I have seen a Fellow, whom all the World knew to have Nothing in him, not only pretend to Something himself; but supported in that Pretention by others who have been less liable to be deceived'.

The requirements the narrator of *Tristram Shandy* sets for himself are such that they are impossible to meet. Tristram wishes for a narrative which would be digressive and progressive at the same time, which would express simultaneity with the linear medium of written language, and would capture all that passes in his mind. Yet, Tristram makes the reader conscious of the impossibility of his task from the beginning by repeatedly insisting on his potential failure. Nevertheless, he sets out to tackle his work with good humour and energy. Thus the whole process takes the shape of a game where the pseudo-author seems to take some pleasure in wilfully carrying a sense of frustration throughout the novel, only to be able to boast loudly at any of his little achievements which take all the more importance as the task is described as being impossible.

When a story is interrupted, whether it is done without any excuse at all, or on the grounds of lack of time, panic, or because the narrator has too many stories on the go, it is never seen as being upsetting or as being a loss to Tristram: there is always more to tell. With the interruptions in *Tristram Shandy*, as with the 'leures', the reader is made to realise that the 'and then, and then' of E. M. Forster is seen as an element of game rather than as a serious narrative priority in the book.²⁸ After having read a few chapters of the book, the reader can foretell that any story told will not last long and that many other elements are going to get in the way, interrupting the current story-line for a while – for a paragraph, a whole chapter, some volumes – or for good. For example, Uncle Toby starts answering his brother Walter, who wonders what is happening upstairs:

I think, replied my uncle *Toby*, taking his pipe from his mouth [...], — I think, says he: — But to enter rightly upon my uncle *Toby*'s sentiments upon

²⁸ See the definition of story and plot in E. M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel*, 1927 (London: Penguin Books, 1974), p. 93: "The king died and then the Queen died" is a story [...]. "The King died, and then the Queen died of grief" is a plot'.

this matter, you must be made to enter first a little into his character, the outlines of which I shall just give you, and then the dialogue between him and my father will go on as well again. (*TS*, I 21, pp. 70-1)

In volume two, chapter four, the narrator consciously reminds the reader that the conversation was previously going on, and that it will soon be resumed: 'I own, when that's done, 'twill be time to return back to the parlour fire-side, where we left my uncle Toby in the middle of his sentence'. However, the reader has to wait until volume two, chapter six, for the dialogue to be continued. There is an anticlimax which gives an ironical turn to suspense, as the end of the missing sentence is simply: '— I think, replied he, — it would not be amiss, brother, if we rung the bell' (p. 114). Moreover, many sentences and discussions start *in medias res* or end in aposiopesis. This is the case, for instance, when Tristram begins *in medias res* at the end of a conversation he is supposed to have held with a reader:

— I won't go about to argue the point with you, — 'tis so, — and I am persuaded of it, madam, as much as can be, 'That both man and woman bear pain and sorrow, (and, for aught I know, pleasure too) best in a horizontal position. (*TS*, III 29, p. 254)

Most aposiopeses are omissions in complicity with the reader. They suggest the end of the sentence and leave the responsibility for any obscenity to the reader. Instead of providing one word or one meaning only, they open the text and the reader's imagination to a multiplicity of possibilities, all guided, of course, by the context and the tone of the narration. One reads, for example, 'and now and then, though never but when it could be done with decorum, would give *Bridget* a —— / Precisely in this situation, did these things stand for five years' (*TS*, III 24, p. 247). When Tristram wants to avoid obscenities or to create equivocation, he also uses asterisks: "'Tis of *Cornelius Gallus*, the praetor [...]. — He died, said my father, as ***** — And if it was with his wife, said my uncle *Toby* — there could be no hurt in it. — That's more than I know — replied my father' (*TS*, V 4,

p. 426). Tristram's technique of equivocation which provokes laughter seems to correspond to the 'troisième terme' a writer must look for in order to obtain a 'subversion subtile', according to Barthes:

J'entend [...] par subversion subtile celle qui ne s'intéresse pas directement à la destruction, esquive le paradigme et cherche un autre terme: un troisième terme, qui ne soit pas, cependant, un terme de synthèse, mais un terme excentrique, inouï. Un exemple? Bataille, peut-être, qui déjoue le terme idéaliste par un matérialisme inattendu, où prennent place le vice, la dévotion, le jeu, l'érotisme impossible, etc.; ainsi, Bataille n'oppose pas à la pudeur la liberté sexuelle, mais... le rire' (*Le plaisir du texte*, p. 87).

Sterne's text contains subtle techniques to hold the attention of the reader and to develop story lines despite the fragmentation. It is not a text which is uninterested in the content, nor a story one can follow continuously for its own sake until it comes to a denouement. It is on the edge. It lends itself well to a comment Barthes made about Flaubert and his use of interruption:

Voilà un état très subtil, presque intenable, du discours: la narrativité est déconstruite et l'histoire reste cependant très lisible: jamais les deux bords de la faille n'ont été plus nets et plus ténus, jamais le plaisir mieux offert au lecteur – si du moins il a le goût des ruptures surveillées, des conformismes truqués et des destructions indirectes. (ibid., p. 18)

Moreover, in *Tristram Shandy*, the fragmentation creates a feeling of open-endedness which is uplifting rather than depressing, and it opens horizons for investigation. For the reader, such a technique is attractive, since it requires a greater participation than a work which demonstrates everything, and, as such, gives the illusion of completeness and the feeling that nothing remains to be added. Iser reminds one that:

No tale [...] can be told in its entirety. Indeed, it is only through inevitable omissions that a story will gain its dynamism. Thus whenever the flow is interrupted and we are led off in unexpected directions, the opportunity is given

to us to bring into play our own faculty for establishing connections – for filling in gaps left by the text itself.²⁹

When the reader is given the start of a story and it is interrupted before he has a chance to get deeply involved in it, his attention is taken away from the narrative and brought towards the narration, and especially towards its narrator in his act of creation, which helps to capture the sense of literature as process. The reader is kept guessing and, as Preston notices,

Tristram gives the impression that he hardly knows what is coming next: he is trying to evade the sense of “literature as a finished product”. In such literature, “the suspense is thrown forward until it reaches the end, and is based on our confidence that the author knows what is coming next”.³⁰

The stories promised which are not told and the interruptions are a way of not being caught in the succession of time, of avoiding to have to go forward inexorably and to face the inevitability of death.

The way Tristram tells his story, happily concentrating on trifling details, constantly interrupting the flow of his narrative and leaving loose ends only to start a new topic afresh, shows that, whenever he stops, he will only have fragments. But, in *Tristram Shandy*, the reader is then given the feeling that each fragment is worth developing for itself in all its details, no matter how long it can take, for comedy’s sake and for what could even turn out to be a coherent philosophy of life:

These unforeseen stoppages [... which] will rather increase than diminish as I advance, --- have struck out a hint which I am resolved to follow; --- and that is, --- not to be in a hurry; --- but to go on leisurely [...]. (*TS*, I 14, p. 42)

²⁹ Wolfgang Iser, ‘The Reading Process: a Phenomenological Approach’, *New Literary History*, 3 (1971), 279-99 (p. 285), in Shlomith Rimmon-Kennan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* (London: Routledge, 1983), p. 127.

³⁰ John Preston, *The Created Self: The Reader’s Role in Eighteenth-Century Fiction* (London: Heinemann, 1970), p. 183. Inner quotations: Northrop Frye, ‘Towards Defining an Age of Sensibility’, *ELH* (June 1956), as reprinted in *Eighteenth-Century English Literature: Modern Essays in Criticism*, ed. by James L. Clifford (New York: Oxford University Press), p. 312.

Moreover, as there are so many things in the world worth describing, a writer can only get misled: 'I fly off from what I am about, as far and as often too as any writer in *Great Britain*' (TS, I 22, p. 80). As a result, nothing can be told straightforwardly: 'For, if he is a man of the least spirit, he will have fifty deviations from a straight line to make with this or that party as he goes along, which he can no ways avoid' (TS, I 14, p. 41). Sterne appears to be directly inspired by Swift in this quotation. Swift's narrator in *A Tale of a Tub* intersperses his tale with numerous digressions and praises the wanderings of travelling as well as those of writing:

After so wide a Compass as I have wandred, I do now gladly overtake and close in with my Subject, and shall henceforth hold on with it an even Pace to the End of my Journey, except some beautiful Prospect appears within sight of my Way; whereof, tho' at present I have neither Warning nor Expectation, yet upon such an Accident, come when it will, I shall beg my Readers Favour and Company, allowing me to conduct him thro' it along with my self. (*Tale*, p. 188)

Moreover, Stedmond reminds us that, in many of Sterne's sources, not least Burton and Rabelais, 'there is much scholarly learning, with many references to authority and digressive anecdotes seemingly activated by the desire to say all that has been said, and can be said, relative to each point raised'.³¹ So, instead of portraying a narrator who is a failure and has no control over his narrative material, Sterne offers a story teller who is conscious of having, as Italo Calvino has it, a 'real wealth' of material at his disposition.³² Calvino's narrator announces that he purposely maintains his position 'slightly below the narrative possibilities at [his] disposal', in order to give a richer texture to the narrative and stretch it spatially 'like a forest that extends in all directions' (Calvino, p. 109). He justifies his choice

³¹ John M. Stedmond, *The Comic Art of Laurence Sterne* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967), p. 15.

³² Italo Calvino, *If by a Winter's Night a Traveller*, translated by William Weaver (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981), p. 109.

by explaining that, if he 'had only one story to tell, [he] would make a huge fuss over this story and would end up botching it in [his] rage to show it in its true light' (ibid.). He strongly echoes Tristram when he states that, instead, his technique puts him: 'in a position to handle [his stories] with detachment and without haste, even allowing a certain irritation to be perceptible and granting [himself] the luxury of expatiating on secondary episodes and insignificant details' (ibid.). The narrative perspective offered by Calvino's narrator provides a refreshing way of interpreting Tristram's excess of text, constant interruptions, and narrative wanderings. An example of comic eclecticism, in *Tristram Shandy*, is that of a 'MEMOIRE présenté à Messieurs les Docteurs de SORBONNE'. It is inserted in French in the body of the text, together with a note containing the English translation, in order for the reader to consult if he has 'the curiosity to see the question upon baptism, *by injection*, as presented to the Doctors of the *Sorbonne*, — with their consultation thereupon' (*TS*, I 20, p. 66, note 6). In addition, Tristram's narrative is formed of many heterogeneous elements:

I wish I could write a chapter on sleep. [...] / It is a fine subject! / And yet, as fine as it is, I would undertake to write a dozen chapters upon button-holes, both quicker and with more fame than a single chapter upon this. / Button-holes! — there is something lively in the very idea of 'em [...]. (*TS*, IV 15, pp. 345-46)

So, great and trifling topics and events are included in the text on the same level and they are interchangeable. The use Sterne makes of Locke's theories on the association of ideas, for instance, turns a universal mechanical system into the comic study of two whimsical brothers and their peculiar hobbyhorses. On the other hand, the incident of uncle Toby and the fly serves, in itself, as an example of philanthropy: '☞ This is to serve for parents and governors instead of a whole volume upon the subject' (*TS*, II 12, p. 131). Thus, the most trifling and bawdy events turn into universal wisdom. Another lesson to the world is given by Phutatorius, who left open 'that particular aperture' of his breeches which let the hot chestnut in. One reads: 'the neglect of this punctilio in *Phutatorius* (which by the bye

should be a warning to all mankind) had opened the door to this accident' (*TS*, IV 27, p. 224-225). This chapter cleverly interweaves a parody of a learned religious discussion, Phutatorius's irrational reaction to pain, and finds a new use for badly written books as an efficient cooling down of tender areas. The distortion of the hierarchy between great and small, important and trifling, renders the chain of causality absurd and, at the same time, makes it much more human:

Matters of no more seeming consequence in themselves than, '*Whether my father should have taken off his wig with his right hand or with his left,*' — have divided the greatest kingdoms, and made the crowns of the monarchs who governed them, to totter upon their heads. (*TS*, III 2, p. 187)

Byrd uses one of Sterne's letters in his attempt to define his debt to Cervantes: 'in general I am persuaded that the happiness of the Cervantic humour arises from this very thing — of describing silly and trifling Events, with the Circumstantial Pomp of great Ones' (*Letters*, p. 77, in Byrd, p. 34). No specific guidelines would make the reading of *Tristram Shandy* easier. The reader has to take in everything as it comes, without warning or transition, since everything is presented with the same importance. The narrator's seeming lack of selectivity can be traced to its author, as Sterne's 'antipathy to seriousness is united with a tendency to be unable to regard anything merely superficially'.³³

The interruptions, the unexpected succession of unannounced speakers, the constant changes of direction of the story-line and the time-shifts, do not allow the reader to skip through the text and freely build his chosen meaning according to his own experience or his state of mind. Instead, he is constantly jolted and taken aback and has to adapt to the change of story, scenery, period of time and speaker. Therefore, the reader is forced to look

³³ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 239, quoted in Melvyn New, 'Sterne and the Narrative of Determinateness', *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 4 (1992), 315-29, reprinted in *Critical Essays on Laurence Sterne*, ed. by Melvyn New (New York: G.K. Hall, London: Prentice Hall, 1998), pp. 127-39 (p. 136).

at the text closely and see in the text what the narrator is pointing at. These are techniques of 'defamiliarization' praised by Shklovsky, since they allow the reader to look anew at what is otherwise taken for granted and hardly perceived for what it is: 'A work is created "artistically" so that its perception is impeded and the greatest possible effect is produced through the slowness of the perception'.³⁴ The lack of connections between the various passages increases the slowness of perception since the reader has to adapt to changing perspectives without warning or transitions. Iser describes this process in Joyce and the Nouveau Roman:

The reader is forced to try and identify the perspective and the referential context of each individual sentence or section, which means that he must constantly abandon the connections he had established or had hoped to establish. The alternation of theme and horizon is so accelerated that reference becomes virtually impossible, and in its place is a continual process of transformation that leads back into itself and not into a composite image of reality.³⁵

Iser reminds us that reality offers no guidance in one's search for hierarchy, and few connections between its moments – except memory – in a world experienced in an empirical and subjective way, where perspective is constantly changing and landmarks fleeting:

One might continue the argument by saying that only in memory do we have the degree of freedom necessary, if we are to bring the disordered multiplicity of everyday life into the harmonious form of a coherent gestalt – perhaps because this is the only way we can retain meanings of life. Thus the gestalten of memory extract meaning from and impose order on the natural heterogeneity of life. If this is so, then the traditional realistic novel can no longer be regarded as a mirror-reflection of reality, but is, rather, a paradigm of the structure of memory, since reality can only be retained as reality if it is represented in terms of meaning. This is why the modern novel presents reality as contingent and 'meaningless', and in so doing it shows a reaction to conventional habits of perception by releasing reality from the illusion-making structure of memory. This very unmasking of a traditional way of grasping

³⁴ Victor Shklovsky, in the introduction to 'Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*: Stylistic Commentary', in *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays*, Trans. by Lee Tristram Lemon and Marion J. Reis (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), pp. 25-57 (p. 22).

³⁵ Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), p. 101.

reality must also be represented, however, and so the need for illusion in consistency-building – the precondition for securing uptake – is not even obviated by those texts that resist illusion-making in order to direct our attention to the causes of this resistance. (*The Act of Reading*, p. 125)

On the one hand, *Tristram Shandy* reacts against 'conventional habits of perception by releasing reality from the illusion-making structure of memory' (*ibid.*); on the other hand, it has whole sections which both retain some illusory realistic representation and point at the artificiality of it. For example, the conversations between the characters are illusory passages since they are rendered very realistically, but at the same time, they are constantly interrupted, and they sometimes even stretch over several chapters, fragmented and repeated to the point of saturation:

— I wish, quoth my uncle *Toby*, you had seen what prodigious armies we had in *Flanders* (*TS*, II 18, p. 169); — I wish, Dr. *Slop*, quoth my uncle *Toby* (repeating his wish for Dr. *Slop* a second time, and with a degree of more zeal and earnestness in his manner of wishing, than he had wished at first*) — I wish, Dr. *Slop*, quoth my uncle *Toby*, 'you had seen what prodigious armies we had in *Flanders*.' (*TS*, III 1, p. 185); — What prodigious armies you had in *Flanders*! (*TS*, III 2, p. 187); — What prodigious armies you had in *Flanders*! (*TS*, III 6, p. 192)

Time seems to spin and this sentence is repeated to such a degree that the signifier of the words becomes more important than the signified. Therefore, the reader comes to read these words as words, not being interested in their meaning anymore since, in the process of the repetition, they seem to have lost their significance. In addition, if there is a reminder of what happened before, in order to link the parts of a conversation or an episode which were interrupted, it takes a strange shape. For instance, *Tristram* forgets a character in a certain position and reminds the reader of it (*TS*, V 5, p. 427); he repeats the same sentence outrageously as in the example above; and he tells the reader off for not following the story properly (*TS*, I 20, p. 64). The thin border between the re-creation of reality and its destruction in *Tristram Shandy* matches one of Barthes's definitions of the eroticism that can be found in the act of reading:

Deux bords sont tracés: un bord sage, conforme, plagiaire (il s'agit de copier la langue dans son état canonique, tel qu'il a été fixé par l'école, le bon usage, la littérature, la culture), et un autre bord, mobile, vide (apte à prendre n'importe quels contours), qui n'est jamais que le lieu de son effet: là où s'entrevoit la mort du langage. Ces deux bords, le compromis qu'ils mettent en scène, sont nécessaires. La culture ni sa destruction ne sont érotiques; c'est la faille de l'une et de l'autre qui le devient. (*Le plaisir du texte*, pp. 14-15)

Thus, although *Tristram Shandy* contains realistic descriptions and characters, fragments of conversation, theories, and parodies of many fields of learning, which construct meaning and bring vivid images to the imagination, the reader is constantly sent back to and confronted by the text itself, to the problems and the potential of language, to the techniques of story building. This is a reading which questions writing, but also, because of the unsettling effect of the narrative on the reader, one is led to question one's capacities as a reader at every step. If one follows Barthes's definition, one could call *Tristram Shandy* a 'texte de jouissance':

Texte de plaisir: celui qui contente, emplit, donne de l'euphorie; celui qui vient de la culture, ne rompt pas avec elle, est lié à une pratique *confortable* de la lecture. Texte de jouissance: celui qui met en état de perte, celui qui déconforte (peut être jusqu'à un certain ennui), fait vaciller les assises historiques, culturelles, psychologiques, du lecteur, la consistance de ces goûts, de ses valeurs et de ses souvenirs, met en crise son rapport au langage. (*Le plaisir du texte*, pp. 25-26)

In *Tristram Shandy*, the movement against completion and Tristram's paradoxical attitude towards the progression of the narrative create narrative complexities which lead the reader to question the text and his own act of reading. Forster has a precise idea of the role of the author and of his relationship with the reader: 'The plot-maker expects us to remember, we expect him to leave no loose ends' (*Aspects of the Novel*, p. 97). We have seen that loose ends in *Tristram Shandy* are numerous and form part of the nature of the book. Holtz claims: 'Sterne demands, much as Joyce does, that the reader hold in suspension a multitude of allusions and cross references until the pattern falls into place' (Holtz, pp. 104-05). The fact that the reader has to 'hold in suspension a multitude of

allusions and cross references' is true for the reading of any work of fiction, since one is never given the whole of the information needed at once, but has to reconstruct the story from various elements scattered through the book. This process is made particularly difficult in *Tristram Shandy* because of the fragmentation, the time-shifts, and the digressive nature of the narrative. But the main problem with this theory in *Tristram Shandy* is that there is not one pattern or plot 'fall[ing] into place' which would form a complete, organised and definite picture on the canvas (*ibid.*). Tristram often gives the illusion that he is aiming for completion. For instance, he expresses his need to complete his father's work, and states: 'in order to render the *Tristrapædia* complete, — I wrote the chapter myself' (*TS*, V 26, p. 459). One can also read: 'The reader will be content to wait for a full explanation of these matters till the next year' (*TS*, II 19, p. 181); and 'This will be fully illustrated to the world in my chapter of wishes' (*TS*, III 1, p. 186). In fact, the great majority of Tristram's plans to complete stories do not come to anything. Stories are promised and not told, and when they are told they are interrupted or abandoned in mid-air. For example, Tristram scatters throughout the text references to the story of his uncle Toby's amours, which he presents as being 'the choicest morsel of [his] own story' (*TS*, IV 32, p. 401). The promise keeps the reader waiting for many volumes, since the story is only tackled, with many interruptions, in volumes eight and nine. The story ends with the last chapter of the last volume, incomplete, after Trim has informed Toby about the widow's concupiscence, and Walter is about to lecture his brother on the topic. The last volume finishes four years before Tristram's birth, which was related in volume three. The time shifts allow Tristram to leave the story open, and at the same time to give a hint of the unsuccessful outcome of the amours to the reader very early in the book. When discussing Mrs Shandy choice of a midwife, as Tristram is about to be born, Walter accuses Toby of knowing nothing about women, to which Toby answers:

I know nothing at all about them, [...] and I think, continued he, that the shock I received the year after the demolition of Dunkirk, in my affair with widow Wadman; — which shock you know I should not have received, but from my total ignorance of the sex, --- has given me just cause to say, That I neither know, nor do pretend to know, any thing about 'em, or their concerns either. (TS, II 7, p. 117)

This way of telling the story renders the problem of completion superfluous, as one knows in advance that it will end in a failure, even though one does not know the details of how it happened. The reader is thus made to focus on the intricate details of the event, painted by strokes, rather than on its denouement or on the complete picture. What is more, the movement towards expansion and the inclusion of multifarious material endows Tristram's work with a 'cyclopaedic' or centrifugal nature which cannot possibly lead to any definite tidying up of loose ends. Tristram gives the impression that he wishes to encompass everything in his book — not only the totality of his life starting with his conception — but all elements of learning closely or loosely relating to his life and that of his family, to his centres of interest and to their own, which include many arts and sciences. Yet, Tristram comically forecasts that, when men achieve complete knowledge:

it is to be hoped, it will put an end to all kind of writings whatsoever; — the want of all kind of writing will put an end to all kind of reading; --- and that in time, *As war begets poverty, poverty peace*, — must, in course, put an end to all kind of knowledge, --- and then — we shall have all to begin over again; or, in other words, be exactly where we started (TS, I 21, p. 72)

This could be read as a satire of some 'modern' scholars such as Wotton who, in Swift's time, pedantically believed that if modern learning continued to be so fruitful, full knowledge could be achieved rapidly:

Now the Method of growing Wise, Learned, and *Sublime*, having become so regular an Affair, and so established in all its Forms; the Number of Writers must needs have increased accordingly [...]. Besides, it is reckoned, that there is

not at this present, a sufficient Quantity of new Matter left in Nature, to furnish and adorn any one particular Subject to the Extent of a Volume. (*Tale*, p. 146)³⁶

Tristram Shandy cannot be summarised in the way a simple, or even a rather complex, plot line can be, because of the excess of the narrator's comments which are interwoven in the text. One can summarise and organise in a pattern a series of events more or less easily. But it is not possible to summarise every element of a flow of ideas and comments and to find a pattern in which they all 'fall[] into place' (Holtz, pp. 104-05). So, Forster's contract between the plot-maker and the reader can be found in *Tristram Shandy*, but only at the level of expectation. The reader is destabilised. On the one hand he expects to find a reliable narrator and he feels that he has a duty to re-configure the words on the page in a meaningful and complete picture. On the other hand, he realises that the book is made of loose ends, procrastination, anticlimaxes, frustrations, and failures.

During the reading process, characterisation is not linear or static: the reader's mind forms an image from an element of description or a conversation he has just read, or from the conclusions he draws from a particular situation, then, when he stumbles across another element of characterisation, this picture is supplemented (either by being confirmed or contradicted). This process is complex, but it is smooth and regular in a narrative such as *Tom Jones*, which is relatively orderly and progressive, as discussed above. When the reader has to form the portrait of Allworthy, Tom's adoptive father, he is given a positive image of the venerable man which is being reinforced by the meaning of his name. As the novel develops, this portrait has to be modified according to the man's reactions to the situations in which he is involved. The reader realises that the 'good man recognises the

³⁶ William Wotton (1666-1727) wrote a defence of contemporary learning in which he explicates the brother's allegory in *A Tale of a Tub*. The role of this defence is developed in detail in chapter four of the thesis.

goodness in others despite false appearances; but he believes in false appearances when they simulate goodness' (*The Act of Reading*, p. 186). As Iser makes clear, 'meaning itself [...] has a temporal character':

A second reading of the text will never have the same effect as the first, for the simple reason that the originally assembled meaning is bound to influence the second reading. As we have knowledge that we did not have before, the imaginary objects accumulating along the time axis cannot follow each other in exactly the same way. [...] With each new reading, it is only the time dimension that changes, but this alone is enough to change the images, for it is their position along the time axis that initiates processes of differentiation and combination. (*The Act of Reading*, p. 148)

On a second reading of *Tom Jones*, for example, the reader knows from the beginning about the nature of the character and the consequences of his mistakes. Although the sense of suspense is lost, one may find it exciting to build a more subtle and accurate portrait which takes into account the dramatic irony Fielding includes in the characterisation. As Iser states, 'the reader is to acquire a sense of discernment' (*The Act of Reading*, p. 186). In *Tristram Shandy*, on the other hand, the narrator pushes the technique of accretion of details to its extreme. The reader is better acquainted with the characters, but their portraits do not follow an orderly chronological progression. They are fragmented and focus on their oddities, and the consequences of their actions are to be found alongside their description, or before they are even described. Tristram creates a work which is, according to his own definition, 'digressive, and it is progressive too, — and at the same time' (*TS*, I 22, p. 81). So, he claims for the portrait of Uncle Toby that 'some familiar strokes and faint designations of it, were here and there touch'd in, as we went along, so that you are much better acquainted with my uncle *Toby* now than you was before' (*ibid.*, p. 80). The narrator also constantly destroys the referential illusion. The passage which involves the two brothers going down the stairs, for instance, takes a surreal tint when, because the brothers are 'in a talking humour', Tristram suggests that the time of the narrative needs to be

expanded so that 'there may be as many chapters as steps' (*TS*, IV 10, p. 336). The dialogues of the characters are deconstructed by several lengthy narratorial intrusions and the two narrative levels intermingle. But the most important transgression of realism happens when the narrator asks his readers to help him 'to get [his] father and [his] uncle *Toby* off the stairs, and to put them to bed', as if they were mere puppets (*TS*, IV 13, p. 341). He then feigns losing interest in the fate of his characters and talks about his difficulties in writing the book. At the end of the chapter, he offers a reward for the good work the reader has done for him:

— So then, friend! you have got my father and my uncle *Toby* off the stairs, and seen them to bed? [...] — Here's a crown for your trouble. (*ibid.*, p. 343)

Thus, building the portrait of a character is openly seen as a game of construction in *Tristram Shandy*. The narrator makes the reader conscious of the mechanisms of characterisation and he goes so far as to pretend that the reader can be of some concrete help in the process. One striking consequence of the nature of this narrative, which is disordered, diffused, and does not lead the reader towards a denouement, is that the strokes of portraits the reader is given do not lead him progressively towards a rounding off of the plot, towards a happy or an unhappy ending. The characters do not undergo changes, or develop in a way that the reader can follow on a progressive time-line. They are presented at various stages of their lives for a few key moments, and their portraits do not seem to carry a final aim with them. Any reflex the reader would have to attempt to build an accurate and comprehensive portrait of the characters which would follow the development of their fate is doomed to be thwarted by the narrator. Since a first reading of *Tristram Shandy* does not allow elements of characterisation to accumulate on the time-axis in a continuous and progressive way, then, a second reading of *Tristram Shandy* can only lead the reader to concentrate better on the individual strokes of the characters' portraits,

knowing that they do not intend to point in the direction of a particular ending or fate, nor to give a complete picture of them. This technique reinforces the spatial and multi-dimensional aspect of Sterne's characterisation, for the combination of views which almost does away with a temporal progressive movement gives us the illusion of depth and breadth. Tristram justifies the lack of completion or the choice to work by strokes, rather than following a progressive line of development, when he tells the story of 'Momus's glass'. He then concludes that a biographer on earth cannot have access to the exact and complete picture of a man's character, so that he 'must go some other way to work' (TS, I 23, pp. 82-3). Characterisation is stretched to the point of rupture in Sterne's work, and accretion of details is the only technique which allows the reader to gather knowledge in his chaotic journey through the book. Yet this is also the only way human beings gather any knowledge about their fellow-beings and about the world around. This is probably what makes novels such as *Tom Jones* so attractive to the reader, since they give him a simplified, organised and digested view of people and of life, and provide clues and guidance through the reading's journey.

By contradistinction, the way characters are described in *Tristram Shandy* does not allow a determinate label to stick to reader's mind at the end, since the characters do not reach any particular enlightened state or any condemnation. Rather, our memory tends to retain the various aspects and facets of characters. If we wish to superimpose these facets, we have to allow for a very partial picture, which inevitably includes the numerous oddities and contradictions which make up each portrait. Tristram's characters are never left alone, since the reader has the illusion of the narrator being continuously at the front of the stage, filtering and controlling every word, description and development in their actions and thoughts. Despite this, they are endowed with more depth than Fielding's characters, which

are closer to being two-dimensional, since they mainly represent the virtues he wanted to portray. Thus, one must acknowledge Sterne's talent, for he succeeds in making us share the intimacy of his characters. He makes their world unfold with great clarity and precision, in spite of their seemingly haphazard appearance on the stage, which is usually brief and interrupted, and the absence of a formal progressive introduction to them. This informality, the fact that they are introduced affectionately by the narrator, and that they are usually described in a weak moment (affected by sorrow, pain, disappointment, helplessness, or simply in an awkward position), make the reader feel closer and more sympathetic to them than to characters he would judge more objectively. Moreover, although they are eccentric, the physical and psychological reactions of the characters to the accidents of life are portrayed with such accuracy that one cannot help recognising the true picture of human complexity in them. However sketchy, Sterne's characters, even the minor ones, are rounded, and the reader can feel that they are potentially more complex than the facets Tristram shows us of them in the brief episodes in which they appear. Dyson comments on the reaction to Bobby's death in the kitchen:

What Sterne has done, in this passage, is to introduce an important kind of realism into the novel for the first time. He manages to convey, as James Joyce was later to do in *Ulysses*, the rich mixture of motives, – sincere and insincere, conscious and unconscious, self-centred and disinterested, tainted and yet still human and honest in their way – which surround the ordinary emotions of ordinary people, in the face of the dramas and inevitabilities of life itself. Psychological realism has entered the novel; and as it enters, it makes the satirist's sneers and exaggerations seem a little crude, a little unbalanced, a little untrue to the facts of human nature as they really are.³⁷

One can conclude that Sterne's portrayal of his family and friends is a way to acquire a more humane, tolerant, and less reductive vision of humankind.

³⁷ A. E. Dyson, 'Sterne, The Novelist as Jester', *Critical Quarterly*, 4 (1962), 309-20 (p. 320).

The reader is given the desire to invest himself in the reading of a work of fiction by the unwritten agreement that he is going to contribute to the construction of meaning in the story: 'L'annonce d'une histoire qui va être racontée suffit à ouvrir au lecteur l'espace d'une série de questions dans lesquelles son désir se précipite' (Bony, p. 30). However, there is a large gap between what Tristram announces and what he gives his readers. The title is misleading since, not only are we not told much about the life of Tristram Shandy, but we often get other people's opinion, ranging from that of the members of his family to that of learned men, other writers, religious and medical authorities among others. The announcements turn into 'leurrés' as we have seen above, and one can hardly get involved in a story without it being interrupted, almost drowned in the meanders of the time-shifts or taken over by the comments of the narrator or of some of his characters, as story-telling more often than not gives way to discourse and commentary, leaving questions about the family-plot unanswered. One can wonder whether these techniques, the absence of a plot line leading progressively to a clear-cut sense of completion, together with the blanks, the missing or displaced chapters, the aposiopesis, the graphic devices, and the nonsensical passages, prevent *Tristram Shandy* from being a meaningful book. If one follows theories according to which finding an overall meaning to a work depends on its completion, this question arises. The absence of completion in *Tristram Shandy* challenges the act of reading a work of fiction towards a denouement, towards a solution to the instability triggered by a crisis or an accident which endows the whole work with a meaningful pattern of development and, in effect, give a purpose to its existence. Rimmon-Kennan states: 'By the end of the reading process, the reader usually will have reached a "finalized hypothesis", an overall meaning which makes sense of the text as a whole' (*Narrative Fiction*, p. 121). Yet, when one reads Sterne's book, the theory itself needs questioning.

Only when we have reached the end of a word is its meaning disclosed and can we come back to the word in order to take into account its value and function in a sentence. In the same way, at sentence level, the reading process must go forward and backward to assimilate, for instance, an adjective to the noun it qualifies or a direct object to the verb it complements.³⁸ This is also true of bigger units such as paragraphs and even chapters where, for example, causality and character-building force the reader to go backward and forward in his memory, and sometimes in his actual reading, in order to link the various elements together. But, when reading a text which structure is regular and progression sequential, the illusion that one can read a number of lines without going back on ones steps is very strong and taken for granted. On the contrary, in a text where the reading process is interrupted, disordered, and fragmented, one has to concentrate on almost every single unit of meaning in every single sentence in order not to feel totally lost and destabilised. Then, one becomes aware of the retrospective, fragmented and irregular nature of the reading process.

In *Tristram Shandy*, many factors force the reader to be aware of the complex nature of reading. The technique of the time-shifts, the digressions, and the characterisation by accretion of details bring the reader's attention to the multilinear nature of the text as a complex web. The numerous interruptions prevent the reader from reading forward in search of adventures. The absence of completion and the movement towards expansion send the reader back to the parts of the text rather than towards the ending of the story. The *leurrés* partially destroy the notion of suspense over what happens next. The narrator constantly brings the reader's attention to the text as text and to himself as creator, which

³⁸ My remarks on the retrospective aspect of the reading process were inspired by Ion Coteanu, 'La lecture peut-elle être linéaire?', *Degrés: revue de synthèse à orientation sémiologique*, 28 (1981), a1-a2.

prevents the reader from focusing on the development of any story and points to the artificiality of the book. Finally, the ambiguity of the language puzzles and shocks, forcing the reader to halt, think and contextualise. So that, in *Tristram Shandy*, one has to pay attention to every word and graphic device on the page, to the tenuous links between the scenes, to the numerous tricks of the narration, its multiple meanings, its irony, and its meaningful blanks. Therefore, Fluchère states: 'il n'y a plus un moment critique, mais tous les moments sont critiques, et l'esprit n'a pas le droit de fléchir' (Fluchère, p. 268). *A Sentimental Journey* contains elements of progression in the narration and in the protagonist's behaviour, and a movement forward in time and space which is substantially undisturbed by digressions and interruptions. Thus, what Dupas states about *A Sentimental Journey* applies even more aptly to *Tristram Shandy*: 'l'ensemble du dispositif vise à laisser auteur et lecteur vis-à-vis de leur propre interrogation sur eux-mêmes, de leur questionnement de ce qui fait leur être et le dissout en même temps: les mots'.³⁹

In *Le plaisir du texte*, Roland Barthes draws two broad reading categories, one which rapidly covers the ground of the text in order to go directly to its nexuses, which sees language only as a vehicle of meaning, and will not be hampered if the reader misses a few words; and the other one, which he calls 'lecture appliquée':

l'autre lecture ne passe rien; elle pèse, colle au texte, elle lit, si l'on peut dire, avec application et emportement, saisit en chaque point du texte l'asyndète qui coupe les langages – et non l'anecdote: ce n'est pas l'extension (logique) qui la captive, l'effeuillement des vérités, mais le feuilleté de la signification [...]. (pp. 22-23)

Thus, he explains that, if one read each single word of a novel by Émile Zola, one would stop reading it altogether: 'le livre vous tombera des mains'. Instead, if one read a modern

³⁹ Jean-Claude Dupas, *Sterne ou le vis-à-vis* (Lille: Presses Universitaires de Lille, 1984), p. 102.

text quickly, or piecemeal, the text would become 'opaque' because nothing would happen as such, since what happens, in what Barthes calls the 'texte moderne', happens to the narration itself, not to the succession of events. Consequently, one has to adopt a slow, minute and gustatory reading process:

lisez vite, par bribes, un texte moderne, ce texte devient opaque, forclos à votre plaisir: vous voulez qu'il arrive quelque chose, et il n'arrive rien; car *ce qui arrive au langage n'arrive pas au discours*: ce qui 'arrive', ce qui 's'en va', la faille des deux bords, l'interstice de la jouissance, se produit dans le volume des langages, dans l'énonciation, non dans la suite des énoncés: ne pas dévorer, ne pas avaler, mais brouter, tondre avec minutie, retrouver, pour lire ces auteurs d'aujourd'hui, le loisir des anciennes lectures: être des lecteurs *aristocratiques*. (*Le plaisir du texte*: pp. 22-23)

The reader of *Tristram Shandy* has to be a 'lecteur[] aristocratique' or cannot be. Many readers have remarked on the fact that one does not learn anything about the life of Tristram Shandy apart from in a few key-scenes depicting the birth, baptism, and circumcision of the anti-hero; that the nature of the characters does not change; that the interruptions, the time-shifts and the digressions prevent us from getting involved in a story in a continuous way. What happens in *Tristram Shandy* mainly happens to the enunciation, rather than to the story. The games Tristram plays are with the language and its grammar, with the techniques of characterisation and of descriptions, with the linearity of the act of writing and reading, and, in effect, with the reader's expectations of a text of fiction. The narrator gives out several warnings that his book should be read 'over', that is, thoroughly. For instance, as he mentions his plan to add maps and commentary at the end of his work for clarification, he specifies: 'after my life and opinions shall have been read over, (now don't forget the meaning of the word) by all the *world* [...]' (*TS*, I 13, p. 40). The warning extends to a punishment, when he sends the female reader to 'read the whole chapter over again', this, in order to

rebuke a vicious taste which has crept into thousands besides herself, — of reading straight forwards, more in quest of the adventures, than of the deep

erudition and knowledge which a book of this cast, if read over as it should be, would infallibly impart with them. — The mind should be accustomed to make wise reflections, and draw curious conclusions as it goes along [...]. (TS, I 20, p. 65)

Although one feels in *Tristram Shandy* that deep erudition and knowledge are more often mocked at than praised, the irony of Tristram's statement does not take away the fact that his book certainly cannot possibly be read 'straight forwards' in 'quest of adventures'. In this passage Tristram seem to echo Swift's narrator who criticises the 'hasty' reader for this same reason, as there: 'hath been a superficial Vein among many Readers of the present Age, who will by no means be persuaded to inspect beyond the Surface and Rind of Things' (*Tale*, pp. 134, 66). Swift's hermetic satire, *A Tale of a Tub*, cannot be read straightforwardly. Yet, although the narrator often refers to the book in the making and to narrative devices, uses digressions and interruptions, the satire mainly points the reader's attention outside the world of the book, towards the beliefs and people attacked by Swift. *A Sentimental Journey* also requires a 'lecture appliquée' in so far as the interpretation of the text requires a lot of attention and reflection. However, it is not so openly focused on the materiality of the text as *Tristram Shandy*, and it offers a progressive narrative which the reader can follow, the adventures of a traveller with whom one can identify, even if one must remain aware of the underlying irony and of the other layers of meaning the book offers.

Louise Rosenblatt makes a distinction between 'non-aesthetic (or 'efferent') reading, in which the reader's primary concern is with gathering information, finding solutions, discovering actions to be taken, and 'aesthetic reading', in which the primary concern is

with what happens to and within the reader during the act of reading.⁴⁰ Gathering information and finding solutions is what Tristram tantalises his reader into attempting, which is a strong invitation to 'efferent' reading. Yet, for the reader to make sense of such a destabilising text, he is forced to learn how to read differently, to truly pay attention to every word presented to him, so that he is led into a more 'aesthetic' type of reading. *Tristram Shandy* demonstrates that the reader's understanding of a written work of art is not hampered by its lack of finalisation. If anything, it is enriched by the potential opened by a text which craves for expansion and offers infinite possibilities instead of definite answers. The experience one gains when reading such a text as *Tristram Shandy* is rewarding because, as it stretches the technical potential of the literary text, it challenges the reader's capacity for understanding and adaptability. The vitality and the complexity of the text create exhilaration in the reader. He is destabilised by the constant and sudden changes of perspective and the thin edge between powerful representation and destructive games with the narrative. By being kept on one's guard in *Tristram Shandy*, one gives a greater importance to each section or fragment of text, and Sterne's phrasing and images capture the reader's imagination at every moment. From this angle, one can reverse charges and find novels which offer a denouement reductive, in as much as the main purpose of their parts is to serve the denouement. The techniques developed in *Tristram Shandy*, which we have analysed throughout this chapter, point to the impossibility of a 'finalized hypothesis' from the beginning. The reader of *Tristram Shandy* who expects a finalised or rounded-up story in order to find a satisfactory meaning to his reading is sent back to the artificiality of an ending in a work of fiction. In *Image and Immortality*, Holtz discusses

⁴⁰ This distinction is to be found in Stephen C. Behrendt's article: 'Multistability and Method in *Tristram Shandy*', in *Approaches to Teaching Sterne's Tristram Shandy*, ed. by Melvyn New (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1989), pp. 146-151 (p. 150).

Frank Kermode's view of endings in fiction. Holtz explains that 'ending is a pattern man imposes on his experience in the world, an extrapolation from his own awareness of death that serves to render the rest of the world intelligible' (Holtz, p. 125). Wishing to know how Tom Jones will extricate himself from a bad situation, how the villains who plot against him will be exposed, how he will regain the affection of Allworthy and Sophia is an exciting feeling. To this excitement is added the pleasure granted by Fielding's narrative skill. On the other hand, the frustration of not being lead forwards to a denouement is strongly counterbalanced by the power of Sterne's language which comically and sharply brings into focus both its infinite potential and its irrational nature. Yet this enjoyment is in a different category to the 'jouissance' the reader experiences when he stumbles at each moment on a fragmented text which does not offer a clear sense of direction or a finality, when he realises that the main adventure happens to the words on the page, to the 'énonciation' itself.

This detailed analysis of the disturbances in the progression of the narrative in *Tristram Shandy* has shown that its tangled and destabilising text forces the reader to adopt a different stance towards his reading of fictions. Tristram's narration brings the reader's attention to the materiality and the workings of the fictional text and to its ludic but frustrating potential. In *Tristram Shandy*, but also in other works such as *A Tale of a Tub* and *Tom Jones*, the game between the narrator and the reader does not stop within the space and temporality of the main text. It extends beyond the margin into the footnotes. The following chapter attempts to study the impact of fictional footnotes on the reading process and experience. It aims to show to what extent it changes the configuration of the fiction on the page and the reader's perception of time and space in his reading.

CHAPTER FOUR

Fictional footnotes in eighteenth-century prose fiction

At the beginning of *Seuils*, Gérard Genette gives an extensive definition of the 'paratext':

L'œuvre littéraire consiste, exhaustivement ou essentiellement, en un texte [...]. Mais ce texte se présente rarement à l'état nu, sans le renfort et l'accompagnement d'un certain nombre de productions, elles-mêmes verbales ou non, comme un nom d'auteur, un titre, une préface, des illustrations, dont on ne sait pas toujours si l'on doit ou non considérer qu'elles lui appartiennent, mais qui en tout cas l'entourent et le prolongent, précisément pour le *présenter*, au sens habituel de ce verbe, mais aussi en son sens le plus fort: pour le *rendre présent*, pour assurer sa présence au monde, sa 'réception' et sa consommation, sous la forme [...] d'un livre. Cet accompagnement, d'ampleur et d'allure variables, constitue ce que j'ai baptisé [...] le *paratexte* de l'œuvre. Plus que d'une limite ou d'une frontière étanche, il s'agit ici d'un seuil [...].¹

The problem of progression and continuity in a work of fiction is made more complex by one particular aspect of the paratext (my translation), the footnotes. The journey of the reader through the text is side-tracked and perturbed by what he finds at the margin of the text, which often subverts not only the linearity and continuity of the main text, but also its authority. Although some critical theory has drawn attention to the paratext and its importance in literature, in particular Gérard Genette's *Seuils*, textual analysis of the use of fictional footnotes in eighteenth-century literature is partial. It concentrates on the links and

¹ Gérard Genette, *Seuils* (Paris: Seuil, 1987), p. 7. There are two aspects of the paratext: the 'péritexte' (the text around the text) and the 'épitexte' (the advertising of the book). I shall concentrate on the footnotes, which belong to the 'péritexte' (ibid.).

differences between two or three works (not always fictional, not always from the eighteenth century), without trying to attain a broader picture of this phenomenon in eighteenth-century prose fiction, or to explain why the footnote in these works is a unique discursive element of fiction, how it enriches or undermines the texts it borders and whether or not fictional footnotes should be classified as paratext.

In the eighteenth century, the footnote is found in historical works such as Gibbon's, in poetical works such as Pope's, and in prose fiction in works such as Swift's, Fielding's and Sterne's.² In the Middle Ages, Genette explains, the text was at the centre of the page and often surrounded by explanations written in smaller letters. Marginal gloss appears during the sixteenth century as a neater and concise annotation to the side of the text. Frank Palmeri explains the religious background to marginal gloss:

In medieval texts, Scripture occupies the central position and human glosses fill the margins; by the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the human text occupies the centre of the page, and the margins contain references to the divine text of the Bible which parallel the assertions made in the text. The relation of figure to ground becomes reversed, but the paradigm of resemblance informs both textual practices. In this paradigm, the divine text of Scripture and the human text both possess a comparable status as glosses on the world as a text, and in this way testify to the authority of God. (Palmeri, p. 245)

It is only in the eighteenth century that these notes are transferred to the bottom of the page.

Genette gives details on the historical evolution of 'glose':

Sous le nom plus ancien de glose (Robert date de 1636 l'apparition du mot *note*), la pratique remonte au moyen âge, où le texte, placé au milieu de la page, était volontiers entouré, ou parfois diversement truffé d'éclaircissements écrits en plus petit, disposition encore fréquente dans les incunables du XV^e siècle, où la glose ne se distingue que par son plus petit corps. C'est au cours du XVI^e siècle qu'apparaissent, plus brèves et annexées à des segments plus déterminés

² For a study on the notes in Gibbon's, see Frank Palmeri, 'The Satiric Footnotes of Swift and Gibbon', *The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation*, 31:3 (1990), 245-262. The 1743 edition of Pope's *Dunciad*, dedicated to 'Dr. Jonathan Swift', contains a lot of fictional paratext. See Alexander Pope, *Poetical Works*, ed. by Herbert Davies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966, reprinted paperback ed. 1990), pp. 424-619.

du texte, les “manchettes”, ou notes marginales, et au XVIII^e siècle que l’usage dominant les transfère en bas de page. (*Seuils*, p. 294)

Lawrence Lipking accounts for this change on grounds of economy, convenience in printing, but also on a moral level since, ‘by the end of the seventeenth century the gloss had lost some of its authority. It was no longer self-evident to readers that Scripture and the world were strictly parallel’.³ It is the sceptical and ironical analysis of Pierre Bayle in his *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (1697) which opened the way to the footnote in critical texts (Lipking, pp. 625-26, Palmeri, p. 246). But, even in the eighteenth century, footnotes in English prose fiction were not a common phenomenon since, apart from the works mentioned above, one can only find one footnote in Defoe’s *Moll Flanders*, and posterior editorial footnotes in *Clarissa*. There are no footnotes in Smollett’s *Humphry Clinker*, and although Diderot’s *Jacques le fataliste* is inspired by *Tristram Shandy*, it does not contain any footnotes. Nineteenth-century fiction, which was greatly attached to suspension of disbelief, did not follow the trend, and one has to wait for novelists such as Joyce in the twentieth century to play with the device.⁴

The *Tale* is a mock-allegory and a satire. Yet, what it has in common with the narratives of *Tom Jones* and *Tristram Shandy* gives an insight into why the footnote was in harmony with the nature of these particular works and could not be used easily in works of a different nature. One must recall that ‘the footnote in fiction operates in much the same way as it does in criticism: to call attention to the presence of author and reader on textual grounds’ (Benstock, p. 205). These works came at a time in history when the printing of

³ Lawrence Lipking, ‘The Marginal Gloss’, *Critical Inquiry*, 3 (1977), 609-55 (pp. 622, 625).

⁴ For a study on notes in Joyce’s *Finnegan’s Wake*, see Shari Benstock, ‘At the Margin of Discourse: Footnotes in the Fictional Text’, *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, 98:2 (1983), 204-25 (211-20).

books still contained strong elements of personal presence and orality, with an idiosyncratic narrator who did not have to hide behind referential illusion, and a syntax and punctuation which contained elements of emphasis bringing the speaker – orator, story-teller – into focus, rather than the story (capital letters, italics). The three texts have, with different orientations, common characteristics which facilitate the assimilation of such parasitic elements as fictional and subversive footnotes. Mainly, they possess a self-conscious narrator who is in charge of his fiction, who tends to comment on it and to digress, and who takes his audience into account in the text directly as an interlocutor and ironic target.

Genette defines fictional footnotes as being:

non pas les notes authentiques sérieuses qui peuvent accompagner une œuvre de fiction, mais, à propos d'un texte fictionnel ou non, les notes dont le destinataire lui-même est à quelque titre fictionnel: dénégatif, fictif ou apocryphe. (*Seuils*, p. 312)

In an epistolary novel, such as Richardson's *Clarissa*, there is no guiding narratorial voice, so that the reader can be absorbed directly into the crises the characters express in their letters. The characters in *Clarissa* remain in the diegesis, in the world of letters exchanged, and they do not breach the referential illusion; moreover, their awareness of the progress and pattern of the story which is developing is limited. As a result, the footnotes come from an external and omniscient 'auctoriale' voice (the voice of the author) and are not part of the fiction (*Seuils*, p. 296). The fact that Richardson introduced footnotes in the second edition of *Clarissa* shows he was responding to what he considered to be misinterpretations from readers of the first edition. As Angus Ross explains, eighteen out of the twenty-two notes were added 'to blacken Lovelace or (another reaction of Richardson to criticism) raise Clarissa' (*CL*, Introduction, p. 17). This process is detailed by John Charles Berry:

As the text of *Clarissa* goes through later editions, the interpretations of its author appear around the text in an apparatus that takes the varying forms of an exhaustive table of contents or in footnotes rather than in the actual text.⁵

Ross also points out the 'increased use of italics to nudge the reader's attention to significant words, phrases and longer passages' and concludes that these techniques 'work[...] to some extent against the strengths of the epistolary form', in so far as the work contains voices which are in charge of conveying the meaning of the author by themselves (Introduction to *Clarissa*, p. 17). For Berry, Richardson's additions and changes to *Clarissa* come from the fact that 'he did not accept that an author must assume an absence in the writing process, and his revisions are evidence of his attempts to make his authority and presence more explicit in the text' (Berry, p. 78). The complexity of the characters' psychology and reactions to situations has contributed to giving them something close to a life of their own. As a result, Richardson produced a text which exceeds itself, in the sense that it permits several interpretations and a multitude of shades of meaning, and this, almost in spite of its author.

In Defoe's *Moll Flanders*, the complex nature of the authority of Moll as a narrator and author of her own text makes it impossible for fictional footnotes to be successfully grafted onto it. The editor who writes the preface has an equivocal function, as he acknowledges his essential role in the arrangement and the style of Moll's story:

The Author is here *suppos'd* to be writing her own History [...].

It is true that the *original of this Story is put into new Words*, and the *Stile* of the famous Lady we here speak of *is a little alter'd*, particularly she is made to tell her own Tale in modester Words than she told it at first; the Copy which came first to Hand, having been written in Language, more like one still in *Newgate*, than one grown Penitent and Humble, as she afterwards *pretends* to be.

⁵ John Charles Berry, *British Serial Production: Author, Audience, Text* (The University of Rochester: University Microfilms International, 1989), p. 59. PhD thesis, order number: 8921667.

The *Pen employ'd in finishing her Story*, and making it what you now see it to be, has had *no little difficulty to put it into a Dress fit to be seen*, and to make it speak Language fit to be read [...]. [...] An Author must be hard put to it *to wrap it up so clean*, as not to give room, especially for vicious Readers to turn it to his Disadvantage. (*MF*, p. 1, my italics)

Thus, Moll straddles two categories of Genette's narrators, those of first and second degree narrators ('extradiégétique' and 'intradiegétique'), since, although she is said to have written her autobiography herself, the preface is not written by her, but by a fictional editor who not only introduces her as the narrator of her story, but creates an ambiguity as to who is truly responsible for the text as we read it. Moreover, the main focus of the novel in the main text is the story with its adventures and moral implications. The writing process and the relationship with the reader are mainly dealt with in the preface in a dismissive way, as Moll's style is criticised. In fact, the only passages where the reader is mentioned in the main text are there to remind us that Moll is a sinner, and that her role in this story-telling is a distant and 'indifferent' one, that of relating facts as they were (as far as she can remember with the years which separate her life from her writings), leaving it to the reader to make up his mind:

But I leave the Readers of these things to their own just Reflections, which they will be more able to make effectual than I, who so soon forgot myself, and am therefore but a *very indifferent Monitor*. (*MF*, p. 126, my italics)

It must be the Work of every sober Reader to make just Reflections [on her impressions], as their own Circumstances may direct [...]. (*MF*, p. 288)

The moral indeed of all my History is left to be gather'd by the Senses and Judgement of the Reader; I am not Qualified to preach to them, let the Experience of one Creature compleatly Wicked, and compleatly Miserable be a Storehouse of useful warning to those that read. (*MF*, p. 268)

Finally, the only reflections on the writing and publishing of the story found in the main text are rendered ambiguous by the editor's remarks in the preface and could be read like digressions made by the editor in Moll's name. For instance, one reads:

This may be thought inconsistent in it self, and wide from the Business of this Book; Particularly, I reflect that many of those who may be pleas'd and

diverted with the Relation of the wild and wicked part of my Story, may not relish this, which is really the best part of my Life, the most Advantageous to myself, and the most instructive to others; such however will I hope allow me liberty to make my Story compleat: It would be a severe Satyr on such, to say they do not relish the Repentance as much as they do the Crime; and they had rather the History were a compleat Tragedy, as it was very likely to have been. (MF, p. 291)

As the publishing this Account of my Life is for the sake of the just Moral of every part of it, and for Instruction, Caution, Warning, and Improvement to every Reader, so this will not pass I hope for an unnecessary Digression [...]. (MF, p. 326)

Thus, the footnote which gives the significance of the bell's tolling for Newgate's pensioners is likely to belong to the writer of the Author's Preface, whose control over the text seems to overwhelm the authority of his heroine as the teller of her own story (MF, p. 275). As a result, several voices are intricately interwoven or overlapping in *Moll Flanders*: that of Moll the self-interested thief and whore, that of Moll the repentant and former sinner, and that of the moralistic 'editor'. The combination of these voices raises doubts in the reader's mind about the actual repentance of the sinner and about the truly moralistic vein of the author.

In comparison, *A Sentimental Journey* contains seven footnotes (ASJ, pp. 66, 76, 117, 135, 256, 257, 261). They are mainly translations of French words and short explanations of French customs and usage. One footnote, 'Vide S —'s Travels', refers to Smollett, whom Sterne calls Smelfungus in the main text (ASJ, p. 117). One can attribute these notes to the narrator, as the narrator is also the pseudo-author of the book, and the footnotes are consistent with the narratorial voice. Yet, although they are written by a fictional character, they do not take an active part in the fiction, and they retain a traditional concise and basic explanatory editorial function. When one keeps in mind that 'the footnote [...] call[s] attention to the presence of author and reader on textual grounds', one can see why, in this respect, *A Sentimental Journey*, although written by a self-conscious narrator and pseudo-

author of his book, is of a different nature from that of the *Tale*, *Tom Jones* and *Tristram Shandy* (Benstock, p. 205). Yorick narrates his story in the first person singular. He is often the focus of interest of the episodes as well as being the eyes and the pen through which the experience is presented to the reader. Most of the narrative, though, is in the past tense and is devoted to painting subtle sentimental encounters which only involve a very limited amount of narratorial commentary and directives to guide the reader's interpretation. The movement of the narrative is centripetal, so that the descriptions are very concise, the feelings understated, the digressions short and not very numerous. There is no place for elements of expansion, such as a set of footnotes. It is through Yorick's description of situations, the characters he meets, the few words and gestures they exchange, and most of all through the description of his own behaviour and his short inner reflections which spring from introspection, that the irony develops and the reader forms his opinion of the scenes. As a result, the various elements of satire in *A Sentimental Journey* are woven into the scenes which are presented to the reader, rather than voiced directly by the narrator towards the external reader, in which case footnotes could come into play. For instance, the narrator indirectly satirises forced and artificial sentimentalism by comically describing his incapacity to empathise with the lamentations of the owner of a dead donkey he meets on the road. The rapid pace of his coach does not match his mood, makes him angry and, when it slows down, puts him to sleep (*ASJ*, 'Nampont. The postillon', pp. 142-44). This type of indirect satire, pointed at the narrator himself, does not call for the external and more personally targeted satire footnotes could provide. The only attempt at direct external satire is the footnote mentioned above which refers to Smollett. Moreover, after having composed the preface, the protagonist leaves the *Desobligeant* and his writing activities behind him in the same movement. Consequently, his role as a teller fades into the background, since, in

order to become a better writer, his priority becomes learning how to read the world and the people around him. As Sante Matteo explains, he will become:

an observer/reader, a traveller in search of impressions, experience, and knowledge. He will continue to jump to conclusions and be wrong, but his attitude overall will be one of inquiry rather than valuation. He will be less concerned with 'writing' his world and more with 'reading' it.⁶

So, although the book is devoted to writing in a new way, this activity and the narrator as a storyteller are not the direct focus of interest of the story. Yorick becoming a reader also has an impact on how the external reader is included in the fiction, whereas in *Tristram Shandy*, for example, the narrator revels in giving the reader a very vivid image of himself in his role of story-teller, describing himself physically in the act of writing, only giving an ordered and consistent chronology for his act of writing the book, and often referring to the book as a book in the making. He also constantly invites his readers, who are often personalised, to join in the creative task, using the present tense in his direct addresses to them. In *A Sentimental Journey* on the other hand, the reader is less the focus of attention and he is seldom mentioned (see *ASJ*, pp. 82, 91, 126, 134, 192, 211, 215, 290). Yorick does not personalise his reader, as he simply refers to him as 'the reader', 'he' and 'him' without adding qualifying adjectives, which would create an emotional closeness. There is one instance though, when Yorick is writing his preface, where the reader is referred to as 'my reader' (*ASJ*, p. 82). Yet, in this passage, the tone is ironically didactic and the possessive adjective seems less a mark of affection than a distinction between the reader of *his* book, which is 'of a different cast from any of [his] fore-runners', as opposed to the reader of more traditional travel books (*ibid.*). Yorick does not always address his reader in the past tense, but even when he uses the present or a rhetorical future, it is done in a

⁶ Sante Matteo, *Textual Exile: The Reader in Sterne and Foscolo* (New York: Peter Lang, 1985), p. 150.

detached way: 'so if the reader can form any conjecture of my disposition [...] he may judge within a livre or two what was the precise sum' (*ASJ*, p. 134). One result of Yorick's having stepped out of his role as a writer into that of an observer is that the reader is relegated to a remoter seat, that of reader of a reader, and not called in directly into the text. Thus, any addition to the text pointing to the narrator as a teller rather than as a reader, such as a set of complex and argumentative footnotes, would divert the reader's attention from the general direction of the journey.

Footnotes in *Clarissa* and in *Moll Flanders* do not institute a fictional dialogue with the main text, as they are written by an external voice to the fiction with a different nature and function from those of the main text. Where the footnote in *Moll Flanders* is of factual interest, the footnotes in *Clarissa* serve a guiding and moralistic purpose. They point to the text, but they do not belong to it, they do not 'stem[] from a creative act' (Benstock, p. 205). Although footnotes in *A Sentimental Journey* can be seen as being written by the fictional pseudo-author of the book, they are not argumentative, they do not attract attention to themselves, they are directed at the text and retain a brief and simple editorial function. One needs to distinguish Fielding's footnotes in *Tom Jones* from these. Genette has wrongly dismissed *Tom Jones*'s footnotes as 'autoriales' (written by the author), more precisely 'autoriales sur texte narratorial' as opposed to 'fictionnelles' (written by a fictive author such as Tristram) (*Seuils*, pp. 296-97). He justifies his categorisation by noting that they were actually signed with the initials of the author: "H.F". Since *Tom Jones* was not an anonymous work as were *A Tale of a Tub* and *Tristram Shandy*, Fielding would sign his work in order to protect the authority of his text against forgery, and, as a result, he could be more easily confused with his narratorial and editorial voices. Thus, Genette splits the text of *Tom Jones* in two very distinct parts of a different nature: the story of Tom told by a

narrator who is somehow part of the literary creation; and the notes – together with, I suppose, the introductory chapters and the title headings – written by Fielding in his own voice, external to the fiction. It is easier to make a distinction between Sterne and the narrator of *Tristram Shandy*, since Sterne's narrator is strongly personified, he is also a character of the story, and has a name: Tristram. Genette calls the notes in *Tristram Shandy* 'notes actoriales fictives' (*Seuils*, p. 297). They are notes written by a character who is also the narrator of his text. This is not the case with *Tom Jones*'s narrator, who, in addition, can appear at first glance as being the straightforward 'auctoriale' and reliable voice of Fielding. Moreover, the fact that Fielding's work was not anonymous, and that some of his notes contain references to people he knew and to matters which were his concern as a magistrate, influenced the reader in attributing the footnotes to him directly.

Yet, the nature of the body text, which mainly contains the story of Tom Jones, the nature of the notes, and also of the introductory chapters, the title headings, and the dedication, and the nature of the narrator of *Tom Jones* – the main characteristics of whose voice are to be found in all parts of the text – contradict this blunt separation. There is a confusing hesitation in the narratorial voice between direct addresses to the reader and impersonal comments (see Benstock, pp. 205-06), between omniscience and alleged ignorance, between didacticism and irony, and these ambiguities are to be found in all parts of the book alike. A playful, ironic and defensive tone pervades the whole work and gives it its unity, as do the narrator-pseudo-author's self-consciousness, his attention to the work and the forms it takes, the game with the reader and the breaches of referential illusion.

Firstly, at the very beginning of the book, the dedication rapidly turns into a preface in which Fielding stops addressing his benefactor and adopts the mixed ironic and explanatory

tone that he takes towards his reader as a story-teller and narrator of his book, both in the introductory chapters and in the main text:

For these Purposes I have employed all the Wit and Humour of which I am Master in the following History; wherein I have endeavoured to laugh Mankind out of their favourite Follies and Vices. How far I have succeeded in this good Attempt, I shall submit to *the candid Reader*, with *only* two Requests: First, That he will not expect to find Perfection in this Work; and Secondly, That he will excuse some Parts of it, if they fall short of that little Merit which I hope may appear in others. (*TJ*, Dedication, p. 8, my italics)

Thus, in *Tom Jones*, thanks to the shift from an external 'auctoriale' voice one expects in a dedication, to that of the narratorial voice one is going to find in the story, the dedication is at the margin of the fiction, it is truly the hallway which invites the reader into the book, and gives him a flavour of what the experience is going to be like.

Secondly, the introductory chapters are mainly concerned with, for example, the process of writing, style, criticism, literary norms, and the defence of the new novelistic genre. Yet, as in the main text, the narrator describes and justifies the behaviour of his characters (*TJ*, XIV 1, p. 743); there are references to the story and its development, and reminders of what is happening (*TJ*, III 1, pp. 116-17); one also finds addresses to the reader and the critics (*TJ*, X 1). And on the other hand, the main text, like the introductory chapters, is interspersed with comments about the nature and the development of the work, ironical addresses to the readers and warnings to the critics:

Our Pen, therefore, shall imitate the Expedition which it describes, and our History shall keep Pace with the Travellers who are its Subjects. Good Writers will indeed do well to imitate the ingenious Traveller in this Instance, who always proportions his Stay at any Place, to the Beauties, Elegancies, and Curiosities, which it affords. (*TJ*, XI 9, p. 612)

Matters of a much more extraordinary Kind are to be the Subject of this History, or I should grossly mispend my Time in writing so voluminous a Work; and you, my sagacious Friend, might, with equal Profit and Pleasure, travel through some Pages, which certain droll Authors have been facetiously pleased to call *The History of England*. (*TJ*, I 3, p. 38)

And here, in Defiance of all the barking Critics in the World, I must and will introduce a Digression concerning true Wisdom [...]. (*TJ*, VI 3, p. 282)

So, although the two types of text, introductory chapters and main text, have a different function – which justifies their being placed in a different section of the book, and explains the variations in tone and emphasis – they both belong to the work of fiction as an artistic creation of Fielding's, they have a similar narratorial voice, they echo each other, and they both help the reader to construct meaning from the book by providing complementary angles of vision and understanding. The narrator proudly praises his introductory chapters as being of a superior nature to the main text so that, if ever imitators of fictional works were capable of producing a similar story to that of the main text, they could not achieve the perfection of these introductory essays: 'In the same Manner I have now secured myself from the Imitation of those who are utterly incapable of any Degree of Reflection, and whose Learning is not equal to an Essay' (*TJ*, IX 1, p. 488). But he is also apt to deprecate them ironically in order to satirise dull and laborious authors: 'if [the reader] shall be of Opinion, that he can find enough of Serious in other Parts of this History, he may pass over these, in which we profess to be laboriously dull, and begin the following Books, at the second Chapter' (*TJ*, V 1, p. 215).

Thirdly, the title headings not only contain brief summaries which help to follow the story, but they also contain humour, irony towards the book itself and towards the reader, and nonsense. They comically undermine the authority of the work:

- CHAPTER XII [BOOK I]
Containing what the Reader may perhaps expect to find in it.
 CHAPTER I [BOOK III]
Containing little or nothing.
 CHAPTER I [BOOK IV]
Containing five Pages of Paper.
 CHAPTER IV [BOOK V]
A little Chapter, in which is contained a little Incident.
 CHAPTER V [BOOK V]
A very long Chapter, containing a very great Incident.
 CHAPTER I [BOOK XI]
A Crust for the Critics.

CHAPTER VIII [BOOK XV]

Short and sweet. (TJ, pp. 10-26)

They also point to the work as a book made of paper and ink. Thus, the last title headings of the last book (*TJ*, Book XVIII), from chapter five onwards, comically and repetitively draw the attention of the reader to the fact that the story is coming to an end, and to that only. They do not provide the landmarks expected, and, as such, they do not fulfil their function: 'In which the History is continued; In which the History is farther continued; Continuation of the History; Further Continuation; A further Continuation; Wherein the History begins to draw towards a Conclusion; the History draws nearer to a Conclusion; Approaching still nearer to the End; In which the History is concluded' (*TJ*, p. 29). These titles are in harmony with the tone of the rest of the work. They belong to the fiction, at the margin of the text. They are creative rather than perfunctory.

Thus, although I do not intend to define the complex nature of *Tom Jones's* narrator, I do not wish to create a gap between the nature of the voice in the text which is supposed to concentrate on the story of Tom and Sophia, and the voice which presents the text, comments on it, plays with it and with the reader in the marginal parts of the book. The notes are part of the fiction and 'stem from a creative act rather than a critical one' (Benstock, p. 205). Moreover, they possess a subversive nature which can easily be overlooked, as Benstock may have done, since for her 'the notes here serve *fairly standard purposes* in explaining references in the text, translating Latin intrusions on the text, and reminding the reader of points of fact' (Benstock, p. 205, my italics). Benstock is aware of many functions of the notes in *Tom Jones* and deals with them as 'extensions' of the narrative voice. Her focus is on the confusion created by the changes of narrative stance between first and third person and between personal and impersonal narration, both in the main text and the notes, and on the consequences of this for the text and for the reader

(Benstock, pp. 205-06). But the ambiguous and subversive nature of the notes is hardly commented upon. Genette sees the 'autoriales' notes as a way of adding historical and geographical references or documentation to the work of fiction. Thus, when he follows this reasoning, he stumbles on some of *Tom Jones*'s notes which do not fit his category:

Plus un roman se dégage de son arrière-plan historique, plus la note auctoriale peut sembler saugrenue ou transgressive, coup de pistolet référentiel dans le concert fictionnel. Ainsi, les notes de Fielding pour *Tom Jones* paraissent-elles justifiées quand elles apportent des éclaircissements historiques ou philologiques, des références ou des traductions de citations en texte. Elles surprennent davantage quand elles introduisent – digressions comparables à celles des chapitres liminaires de chaque Livre – une opinion de l'auteur sur tel point de mœurs, et plus encore quand elles font état de quelque incertitude sur la pensée d'un personnage ('Sophie entendait peut-être par là...'), contraire au parti d'omniscience affiché dans le récit, ou peut-être à l'identité de principe entre auteur et narrateur, en suggérant que le premier, responsable de la note, en sait moins que le second, responsable du récit. (*Seuils*, p. 307)

He accepts as 'justifiées' (in the sense of 'justifiable' in English) the notes which contain references and translations, but he is surprised at the notes expressing opinion – which he compares to the opinions found in the 'chapitres liminaires de chaque Livre' – and he attributes both to the direct voice of the author in the book. He can only explain the notes expressing hesitation by suggesting that the author of the notes pretends to know less than the narrator of the main text. First of all, if one makes a distinction between two voices, one must keep in mind that the narrator of the main story also oscillates between omniscience and alleged ignorance in the main text:

Whether his Religion was real, or consisted only in Appearance, I shall not presume to say, as I am not possessed of any Touch-Stone, which can distinguish the true from the false. (*TJ*, I 10, p. 61)

Whether *Partridge* repented or not, according to Mr. *Allworthy*'s Advice, is not so apparent. (*TJ*, II 6, p. 102)

This is not particular to the notes, so that the hesitations cannot thus serve as an argument to differentiate between the voice in the notes (and introductory chapters) and the voice in the story. The narrator's alleged ignorance is all the more striking in that he is often explicit

in his explanations of the plot, the characters, their thoughts and reactions. He even insists on the reader's knowing that he is the one who pulls the strings:

As this is one of those deep Observations which very few Readers can be supposed capable of making themselves, I have thought proper to lend them my Assistance; but this is *a Favour rarely to be expected* in the Course of this Work [...]. (*TJ*, I 5, p. 47, my italics)

These favours are not so rare, since only a few pages later does he enlighten the reader – and this is only one occurrence amongst many others:

But as we cannot possibly divine what Complexion our Reader may be of, and as it will be some Time before we hear any more of *Jenny*, we think proper to give him a very early Intimation, that Mr. *Allworthy* was, and will hereafter appear to be, absolutely innocent of any criminal Intentions whatever. (*TJ*, I 9, p. 59)

This shows that Genette's argument according to which the notes are written by the author who feigns to be less knowledgeable than the narrator in the main text does not hold. Moreover, why should it be surprising to find opinion expressed in the notes, when opinion is expressed everywhere else in the other parts of the work? This is only surprising if one separates the voice in the notes from the voice elsewhere in the book and gives to the notes a purely referential and documentary function. The notes which deal with contemporary issues or figures (*TJ*, actors p. 493, social condition p. 205, friends p. 538, the Law p. 936, entertainment p. 703) bring the real world into the fiction. This does not come as a large breach in the referential illusion for the reader, since *Tom Jones* was introduced to him as a History, not a Romance ('*The History of England*', *TJ*, I 3, p. 38, II 1, p. 75). It has a realistic setting containing customs and manners of the time and historical events, such as the Jacobite rebellion which is included in the plot of the story, as Sophia, for example, is mistaken for Jenny Cameron at Upton (*TJ*, XI 6). The fact that the tone of the notes can be moralistic and take side with an issue is part of the nature of a text which mixes showing and telling. So, on the one hand, the reader can gain his own opinion from the actions of the

characters and their consequences. And, on the other hand, the narrator, in the introductory chapters, but also in the main text, and here in the notes, directly comments and gives his opinion on a great variety of subjects for comedy's sake (see the boxing practice amongst the 'Persons of quality and Distinction', *TJ*, p. 703), but also for the edification of his reading audience (see the treatment of the low clergy, *TJ*, pp. 205, 936).

Finally, the notes which give references and translations of quotations are not merely referential or innocent, and indeed, except for a handful of straightforward explanations and references (*TJ*, pp. 325, 517, 526, 562, 672, 688), most notes are ironic, satirical, moralistic and polemical. Bertrand Goldgar underlines the tradition of mock-scholarship in Fielding's writings which include 'parodic footnotes, mock-etymologies, and intricately tangled references to classical commentators'.⁷ He explains that it is sometimes difficult to 'distinguish the times when a writer of Fielding's erudition is writing mock-scholarship from those times when he is simply being scholarly' since he had a 'deep respect for classical learning' (Goldgar, p. 194). Goldgar defines Fielding's mock-scholarship more as a 'display for the speculation of the curious and the amusement of the knowledgeable' than a 'satire on pedantry' (Goldgar, pp. 204, 195). Fielding also attacks false learning in the *Tragedy of Tragedies*; he 'combines personal satire of the prime minister with both minor parody of scholarly criticism and playful burlesque of the classical sources themselves' in his notes to the *Vernoniad* (Goldgar, p. 198); and, in Nos. 8 and 9 of *The Covent-Garden Journal* (1752), 'mock-scholarship continues as a favorite source of humor, doubling again as satiric weapon and source of comedy for its own sake' (Goldgar, pp. 201-02).

⁷ Bertrand A. Goldgar, "'The Learned English Dog': Fielding's Mock Scholarship", in *Augustan Subjects*, ed. by Albert J. Rivero (London: London Associated Presses, 1997), pp. 192-206 (p. 193).

In *Tom Jones*, one finds two footnotes which express hesitation. The note mentioned by Genette: ‘*Meaning, perhaps, the Bank-bill for 100 l.’ (*TJ*, XVI 5, p. 851), covertly makes explicit what Sophia refers to in her letter to Tom. It is such a strong hint that the reader can hardly take the ‘perhaps’ seriously, and he can smile at the narrator’s attempt to preserve the modesty of Sophia’s generous gesture (she refers to the large sum of money as ‘the Trifle’). Here, as in many places in the main text, the reader may feel that the over-explicitness spoils his pleasure in decoding Sophia’s message all by himself. Yet, such reminders may be justified by the length of the book. In this case, there is a considerable gap between the episode where Tom finds the money and the time when Sophia gives it back to him. The other note: ‘*Possibly *Circassian*’ (*TJ*, IX 8, p. 557), corrects the spelling of Mrs. Western’s reference to slaves. One could think that the narrator is not sure of what the character refers to, and pretends to make a wild guess that would match the context. More comically, the narrator-editor could be seen as correcting the learned Mrs. Western with a respectful hesitation, so as not to criticise her openly. Here the narrator directly takes over from her usual opponent, her brother, and ironically shows that her education is not without faults. If this is the case, then this footnote allows a dialogue to take place with the main text, and it offers another voice that the reader can take into consideration to shed light on to the characters. The voice in the footnotes adds a different perspective to characterisation. The interference is less damaging to referential illusion than if it had been placed in the body of the text. Yet, because it is placed in a note, which is where one expects to find sources of authority cited, it carries more weight. Moreover, the criticism has more impact by being at a certain distance from the text: there, it is more noticeable than a remark inserted in the bulk of the text and strengthens the comic effect. The ‘possibly’ attracts the reader’s attention to the note. It surprises him, and the uncertainty

which it raises makes him think further than if the note was a straightforward 'auctoriale' correction of a character's mistake.

The issue of the translation of quotations in the footnotes is rapidly dismissed as 'serv[ing] fairly standard purposes' by Benstock (Benstock, p. 205), and as 'justifiées' by Genette (*Seuils*, p. 307). Yet, if one looks at works of prose fiction before Fielding, the need for translating Latin, Greek or French quotations was rarely felt, since the audience targeted was highly educated. One still finds, in works after *Tom Jones*, passages which are left untranslated. For instance, in *Tristram Shandy*, Sterne introduces portions of texts in French in his footnotes as documents which he does not translate (*TS*, pp. 337-38, 494). His epigraphs are in Greek, and so are some of his footnotes (*TS*, pp. 461-62). Other footnotes are in Latin (*TS*, p. 706); some also parody Latin references (*TS*, p. 310). Thus, Fielding shows that he wants a readership of learned readers whom he needs to understand the parodic nature of his work when he makes references to other works, to social, political and literary circles. Yet, at the same time, he also wishes to reach those who do not have a Classical education, especially the female reader. In a turn not uncommon in eighteenth-century writing, he includes quotations from the work of Horace in Latin to give more authority to his text as part of the learned tradition. Fielding takes the trouble to include the English translations by one of his contemporaries, Philip Francis, in the footnotes (*TJ*, pp. 412, 489, 660). Francis's work was convenient for his purpose as it contains the Latin and the English version of texts, and his translation was published by Fielding's friend and publisher Andrew Millar. Fielding appears poised between tradition and novelty, between authority and accessibility, as the instance when the translation by Francis directly follows the quotation by Horace in the main text shows. The juxtaposition of the quotation and its translation results in a cumbersome page layout and it makes one wonder whether the Latin

version is at all justified, with its translation so near at hand (*TJ*, XI 1, p. 570). The redundancy is reproduced in the next sentence: 'For as Martial says, *Aliter, non fit, Avite, Liber. No Book can be otherwise composed*' (ibid.). Still, the translations participate in this movement towards the clarification of the text, as the following examples demonstrate. Fielding's narrator knows more than his characters – whose lack of knowledge of the consequences of their separate actions plays a crucial part in the development of the novel. He also boasts about knowing more than his readers: 'Here, Reader, it may be necessary to acquaint thee with some Matters, which, if thou dost know already, thou art wiser than I take thee to be' (*TJ*, X 6, p. 550). Nevertheless, he wishes his readers to know more than his characters. For example, Dowling is very impressed by Jones's Latin quotation, since he himself does not master the language, then he tries 'winking, nodding, sneering, and grinning' in order to hide his ignorance from Jones (*TJ*, XII 11, p. 660). Fielding does not wish to take the risk of putting the reader in the same ridiculous position, so he includes the translation of Jones's Latin quotation in the footnote. Although the main purpose of the translations is the accessibility of the text to a greater number of readers, they also seem to serve a polemical end. For instance, there is a discrepancy in tone between the rather neutrally phrased quotation in Latin '*Scribimus indocti doctique passim*', which H. R. Fairclough translates as 'but, skilled or unskilled, we scribble poetry, all alike' (*TJ*, editor's note 1, p. 489); and the virulence of Francis's translation which Fielding chooses to include in his note: '*— Each desperate Blockhead dares to write, / Verse is the Trade of every living Wight' (*TJ*, IX 1, p. 489). Here the function of the footnote seems less to clarify the meaning of a quotation in Latin by giving its literal translation, than to reinforce the impact of the narrator's attack against so-called poets by setting it off away from the bulk of the main text. The jerky scansion of the verse in English and its poor quality rhyme serve to highlight the satire further. Such a footnote contributes to Fielding's satire on the writing

trade, showing similarities between *Tom Jones*'s footnotes and those in *A Tale of a Tub* and *Tristram Shandy*.

One also finds ambiguous and ironical footnotes in *Tom Jones* which possess a complex and subversive nature one cannot associate with Genette's definition of them as being simply 'autoriales'. Some consist in direct comments on the narrative (personal or impersonal): '*Whenever this Word occurs in our Writings, it intends Persons without Virtue, or Sense, in all Stations, and many of the highest Rank are often meant by it' (*TJ*, I 9, p. 59). This quotation, which defines the author's usage of the word 'Mob' in his work, recalls the notes mentioned above about the bad treatment of the low clergy, as the tone is authoritative and sharp, and the issue moralistic (*TJ*, IV 14, p. 205, XVIII 6, p. 936). Benstock comments on the impersonal style of the quotation: 'we hear in this impersonal definition all the force of the social and political attitudes of the eighteenth-century middle class to which Fielding belonged' (Benstock, p. 206). The narrator explains in the main text that, by showing compassion for Jenny – who is the alleged mother of the abandoned child, Tom – Allworthy becomes the target of suspicion and ridicule of 'the Mob' which accuses him of being the father of the child. The narrator breaches the referential illusion by commenting directly on the matter, claiming Allworthy's innocence and accusing the gossips:

He had indeed committed no other than an Error in Politics, by tempering Justice with Mercy, and by refusing to gratify the good-natured Disposition of the Mob,* with an Object for their Compassion to work on in the Person of poor Jenny, whom, in order to pity, they desired to have sacrificed to Ruin and Infamy by a shameful Correction in a *Bridewel*. (*TJ*, I 9, p. 59)

The attack is all the more cutting in that irony turns the flattering adjectives and nouns describing the Mob's nature and attitude round. Yet, the narrator feels the need to go

further, and he has at his disposal a powerful tool which can be used as a weapon: the footnote.

As we have hinted at above, footnotes have authoritative weight, since this is where one expects to find learned references to and comparisons with major works and authors which reinforce the authority of main text. Their strength also comes from their distance from the main text, which offers a different perspective on the main text to the reader, helping commentary and judgement to take place. Moreover, the white space surrounding the footnote gives it a conspicuous position which catches the eye. The impact of the footnote is also greater as the note is concise. And this note is a short but sharp dagger. The reader's eyes and mind go from the text to the note and are forced to go back to the text in order to make sense of its irony. It is thanks to the double movement of the eyes across the page that meaning takes shape. For instance, the following footnote adds to the complexity of the argument developed in the main text instead of clarifying it. The narrator does not agree with critics, such as Dacier, who are 'ready to allow, that the same Thing which is impossible may yet be probable' (*TJ*, VIII 1, p. 396). He presents this position as an extreme one, and in the next paragraphs he justifies his opinion on the matter. But the note '† It is happy for Mr. *Dacier* that he was not an *Irishman*' needs contextualisation and thinking over on the part of the reader (*ibid.*); it is riddle-like. Battestin, in an explanatory note, gives the context of the note and concludes: 'the point of Fielding's footnote seems to be that, if Dacier had been an Irishman, his paradox would have been dismissed as such another logical blunder', as the Irish 'were noted for the sort of self-contradictory assertion [...] which Fielding here remarks in Dacier' (*TJ*, note 2, p. 396). By stating 'It is happy for Mr. *Dacier* that he was not an *Irishman*', the narrator not only implies that Dacier's theory is contradictory in terms by associating him negatively with Irish men, but he also, in a

convoluted way, rids Dacier of all justification or good reason for such illogical reasoning, since he does not even have the excuse of being Irish. Here, even more than with the note about the Mob mentioned above, one has to go from the text to the note and back to the text and so forth, in order to decipher the enigmatic meaning of the note. The note turns the rather neutrally expressed argument of the main text against critics into a witty personal attack on Dacier, which bears more weight than would general satire, since, by ridiculing the man, his theory loses all credibility, and so do all the critics who think alike. Because the movement of the eyes between text and note is more extensive than that which is required when reading a linear sequence of sentences, the reader is more conscious of the effort of understanding and analysing he has to make when reading in order to bring the meaning of the text to the surface.

It is easy to think of *Tom Jones* as a straightforward didactic text whose narrator simply aims at helping the reader along his journey through the book. One can also be alert to the harshness of certain comments in the book about the critics, but dismiss them as a justified defence of the new genre which does not spoil the friendly relationship between reader and narrator. Yet, in *Tom Jones*, there is a frequent use of irony and manipulation which prevents a straightforward relationship between the narrator and his reader. Firstly, the narrator often uses a kind and praising terminology towards the reader: 'my sensible Reader', 'the learned Reader' (*TJ*, I 1, p. 32), 'our Reader' (*ibid.*, p. 34), 'my sagacious Friend' (*TJ*, I 3, p. 38), 'the sagacious Reader' (*TJ*, I 8, p. 57), 'the curious Reader' (*TJ*, II 9, p. 111), 'the judicious Reader' (*TJ*, III 1, p. 117), 'my worthy Disciples' (*TJ*, III 7, p. 141), 'my Friend' (*TJ*, IV 2, p. 156, X 1, p. 527), 'the learned and sagacious Reader' (*TJ*, VII 12, p. 377), 'my worthy Friend' (*TJ*, X 1, p. 526), 'my good Reader' (*TJ*, XI 1, p. 568), 'the sagacious Reader' (*TJ*, XI 2, pp. 573, XII 8, p. 651), 'our gentle Reader' (*TJ*, XIII 5, p.

700). Yet, one feels that these qualifiers are used, not to show true admiration for the reader, but in order to blackmail him into siding with his ideas. So, if the reader agrees with him, he can be called good, gentle, worthy, learned, judicious, sagacious; if he does not, then these terms cannot apply and the reader loses the favours of his narrator and the qualities lent to him on that condition:

[...] *nor can the learned Reader be ignorant, that in Human Nature [...].* (TJ, I 1, p. 32)

Sneerers and prophane Wits may perhaps laugh at her first Fright, *yet my graver Reader, when he considers the Time of Night [...]* *will highly justify and applaud her Conduct [...].* (TJ, I 3, p. 40)

[...] *and the sagacious Reader will not perhaps accuse her of want of sufficient Forecast in so doing, but will rather admire with what wonderful Celerity she tacked about, when she found herself steering a wrong Course.* (TJ, I 8, p. 57, my italics in these quotations)

One notices the use of the modal verb 'will' in the last two examples, which can express a future action, a polite order or request, and an action which is bound to happen. The ambiguity arising from the multiplicity of meaning enclosed in this modal verb is a powerful and surreptitious way of pushing the reader to feel three times bound to think what the narrator wants him to think: it will be so in the future, the narrator requests it and it is inevitable that it should be so. Secondly, on several occasions the narrator tells the reader he is judicious or sagacious to have guessed this or to foretold that. Yet the praise is to be taken with a pinch of salt. For instance, the narrator makes sure at the same time that he clarifies the matter himself, before or after praising the reader, so that the glory goes to him for his skill rather than to the reader's sagacity:

Nor can the judicious Reader be at a greater Loss on Account of Mrs. *Bridget Blifil*, who, *he may be assured*, conducted herself through the whole Season in which Grief is to make its Appearance on the Outside of the Body, with the strictest Regard to all the Rules of Custom and Decency [...]. (TJ, III 1, p. 117, my italics, except for people's names)

The narrator also leaves it to his reader to sort out matters which he states he cannot explain or judge, as if to set a trap for him:

As to the name of *Jones* he thought proper to conceal it, and why he did so must be left to the Judgement of the sagacious Reader: For *we never chuse to assign Motives to the Actions of Men, when there is any possibility of our being mistaken.* (*TJ*, V 10, p. 258, my italics, except for people's names)

Likewise, he can give a seemingly serious task to the reader, which is in fact impossible to perform:

We would have these Gentlemen [critics] know we can see what is odd in Characters as well as themselves, but it is our Business to relate facts as they are; which when we have done, *it is the Part of the learned and sagacious Reader to consult that original Book of Nature, whence every passage in our work is transcribed, tho' we quote not always the particular Page for its Authority [...].* (*TJ*, VII 12, p. 377, my italics)

Thirdly, it is to be wondered what the value of these praising adjectives is in the narrator's hands. For instance, when Jones asks Partridge to find where Sophia is lodging, Partridge comes back without the name of the street:

'The Name, Sir, why here, Sir, just by,' answered *Partridge*, 'not above a Street or two off. I don't indeed know the very Name; for as he never told me, if I had asked, you know it might have put some Suspicion into his Head. No, no, Sir, let me alone for that. *I am too cunning for that*, I promise you.'

'*Thou art most wonderfully cunning indeed,*' replied *Jones*; 'however I will write to my Charmer, since I believe *you will be cunning enough* to find him To-morrow at the Alehouse.'

And now having dismissed *the sagacious Partridge*, Mr. *Jones* sat himself down to write [...]. (*TJ*, XV 12, p. 831, my italics, except for people's names)

If the narrator's notion of sagacity can be applied to Partridge with such a degree of irony, should not the reader re-consider the compliments addressed to him? In the same way, how can one reconcile the fact that a narrator who so harshly chastises critics, the 'barking' critics (*TJ*, VI 3, p. 282), the 'little Reptile of a Critic', 'my good Reptile' (*TJ*, X 1, p. 525), would innocently praise the reader, then, in a footnote, would equate the two: '*By this Word here [Criticks], and in most other Parts of our Work, we mean every Reader in the World' (*TJ*, VIII 1, p. 396)? Should 'my good Reader' read as 'my good Reptile'? The

narrator seems to enjoy teasing his reader, as when he states that the female reader is the best person to comment on Sophia's beauty (*TJ*, XVIII 12, p. 970). But he can go as far as being insulting: 'Here followed a very learned Dispute between the Brother and Sister concerning the Law, which we would insert, if we imagined many of our Readers could understand it' (*TJ*, VII 11, p. 368). Thus the narrator addresses a variety of readers, in a neutral tone, friendly, ironically, with scorn, and it is difficult to know which category one belongs to when one is reading *Tom Jones*. There is a certain apprehension that one may not be on the narrator's side, and be the target of the chapters of 'sour or acid Kind' he has 'taken Care to intersperse [...] in order to sharpen and stimulate the said Spirit of Criticism' (*TJ*, XVI 1, p. 833). Thus, the footnote which equates critics with 'every Reader in the World' jeopardises the trusting relationship between the narrator and the reader of *Tom Jones*. It tilts the balance on the side of suspicion rather than friendship, or redefines friendship as a stimulating challenge. This goes in the opposite direction to Benstock's interpretation of the royal 'we' as a plural 'we' which brings together the audience and the narrator in the footnote in question:

The plural 'we' [...] gives the sense of the speaker in collaboration with his critics (i.e., his audience, as he himself defines them) by admitting all of us ('we' together) to the circle that the story is tracing. (Benstock, p. 206)

This note and other ironic footnotes in *Tom Jones* do not send one to an exterior reference or authority. Instead, they send one back to the main text, not with a simple clarifying purpose, but by giving the reader a more complex, elaborate and ironical view of the ideas expressed and the actions developed in the main text.

The following footnote does not aim at undermining characters in the text (although it mocks Aunt Western's learned references), readers or critics of this text, but, by using the argument developed by Western and his sister on love, it contests the cultural authority of

the works of Milton, and, in its stride, subverts the role of footnotes as a place for external reliable references to other texts:

‘Your Ignorance, Brother,’ returned she, ‘as the great *Milton* says, almost subdues my Patience.’* ‘D—n *Milton*,’ answered the Squire [...].

*The Reader may perhaps subdue his own Patience, if he searches for this in *Milton*. (*TJ*, VI 14, p. 321)

So, not only does the narrator not give the reference for Aunt Western’s quotation, but it clearly describes Milton’s work as lengthily boring. This is the antithesis of a critical footnote, of a helpful and useful footnote, since, as Frank Palmeri explains:

Footnotes conventionally serve as repositories of authority, where creditable sources may be cited to support an author’s argument; they also provide sites for anchoring an author’s voice so that the appended comments and explanations will validate and complete the text. (Palmeri, p. 258)

Here the expected function of the footnote is used, played upon and artfully turned inside out. Yet, this footnote is in harmony with Fielding’s narratorial voice throughout the book. It is a voice which feels the need, in order to defend its own work, to satirise, to attack and to undermine other literary techniques, other works and professions. The narrator also wishes to educate his audience, who he feels is apt to have the wrong reaction to some episodes in his work. This is, for instance, how the narrator sharply pictures what he believes to be a typical reaction of his audience to Black George running away with the 500 l. belonging to Jones:

Those who sat in the World’s upper Gallery, treated that Incident, I am well convinced, with their usual Vociferation; and every Term of scurrilous Reproach was most probably vented on that Occasion.

If we had descended to the next Order of Spectators, we should have found an equal Degree of Abhorrence, tho’ less of Noise and Scurrility; yet here the good Women gave *Black George* to the Devil, and many of them expected every Minute that the cloven-footed Gentleman would fetch his own.

The Pit, as usual, was no doubt divided: Those who delight in heroic Virtue and perfect Character, objected to the producing such Instances of Villainy, without punishing them very severely for the sake of Example. Some of the Author’s friends, cry’d — ‘Look’e, Gentlemen, the Man is a Villain; but it is Nature for all that.’ And all the young Critics of the Age, the Clerks, Apprentices, &c. called it Low, and fell a Groaning. (*TJ*, VII 1, p. 326)

Some notes cannot easily be interpreted. For example, when the narrator comments upon bravery in women and quotes the *Odyssey* as an example of the fact that the 'Glory' of their husbands is what motivates their love for them, he specifies in a footnote that: '*The English Reader will not find this in the Poem: For the Sentiment is entirely left out in the Translation' (*TJ*, IV 13, p. 202). Benstock rightly puzzles over this footnote:

It is unclear how we are to respond to this information. Do we take offence at the suggestion that as English readers we are insured against the perception of this subtle notion, which is embedded in the Greek text but – according to the author – not in the English? Is this note one of gentle regret or intellectual contempt or of (mere) statement of fact? (Benstock, p. 206)

The reader is taken aback since he is not given in the note the expected reference to the passage in the *Odyssey*. Instead, he is given a critical and ambiguous statement open to various interpretations. The limits of the English language itself seem the most likely target to consider here, since the translator, who could be to blame, is not mentioned by name nor even alluded to. Moreover, if one could be tempted to blame the lack of refinement of the English readers, then the sentence would most likely have ended before the colon, and the translation would not have been mentioned. In addition, there are passages in the main text which deal with the limitations of language for the author in describing actions, feelings and people:

To describe every Particular, and to relate the whole Conversation of the ensuing Scene, is not within my Power, unless I had forty Pens, and could, at once, write with them all together, as the Company now spoke. The Reader must, therefore, content himself with the most remarkable Incidents, and perhaps he may very well excuse the rest. (*TJ*, VII 12, p. 377)

Poor *Sophia* was charmed too; but in a very different Way. Her Sensations, however, the Reader's Heart (if he or she have any) will better represent than I can [...]. (*TJ*, IV 5, p. 169)

As to the present Situation of her Mind, I shall adhere to a Rule of *Horace*, by not attempting to describe it, from Despair of Success. Most of my Readers will suggest it easily to themselves, and the few who cannot, would not understand the Picture, or at least would deny it to be natural, if ever so well drawn. (*TJ*, IV 14, p. 208)

If the Reader's Imagination doth not assist me, I shall never be able to describe the Situation of these two Persons when *Western* came into the Room. (*TJ*, XV 5, p. 798)

Yet, the attitude of the narrator towards the limitations of his work and towards his audience is not at all a straightforward confession of imperfection. In the first quotation, the tone is authoritative, as the narrator states what the problem is and invites the reader to accept the text as it is offered to him. In the second quotation, the narrator's address to the reader is tantalising and ironical, and, in the third quotation, it is openly provocative. In the fourth quotation, the narrator's request for help seems to be merely rhetorical, since it is followed by a long, very precise and lively description of the situation. Finally, there is another footnote which points to the problems of translating from one language to another (here from Latin to English), and to the limitations of the English language: '* "What Modesty, or Measure, can set Bounds to our Desire of so dear a Friend!" The Word *Desiderium* here cannot be easily translated. It includes our Desire of enjoying our Friend again, and the Grief which attends that Desire' (*TJ*, V 9, p. 252). As the translation is not enough here to illustrate his point, he feels the need to define the word '*Desiderium*' at length. Combining tradition and novelty in the transitory period of the eighteenth-century English novel involved the difficult task of adapting Classical inheritance to a wider and less educated audience.

Even a brief study of the footnotes in *Tom Jones* shows that, far from being straightforward, clarifying 'auctoriales' notes, their complexity gives them an important fictional role at the margin of the text. The various functions of 'auctoriales' notes according to Genette are as follows: giving the definition or explanation of words and phrases; providing the translation of quotations in their original language; giving the source, reference and documents which confirm or complement the text; providing details

on a fact that is only alluded to, or bringing a restrictive nuance to the text; mentioning the uncertainties or the complexities which a learned reader will want to find in a note; offering extra arguments to and a defence of the text in anticipation of objections; and digressing from the text (*Seuils*, p. 299). Although, as Benstock says, footnotes in Fielding are mainly a way of 'extend[ing] the narrative voice', footnotes in *Tom Jones* have a subversive role since they question the relationship between narrator and reader; they offer biased translations; they create ambiguity; they are a powerful satirical tool of other literary works and social customs; and when they acknowledge the uselessness of giving a reference to certain texts, they do not fulfil the function expected of them and, as a result, they undermine the process of footnoting itself (Benstock, p. 205). A majority of footnotes in *Tom Jones* seem rather to use the expected function of the 'auctoriales' notes, and by dragging them into the creative act of fiction, they distort this function in order to serve the purposes of the narratorial voice. Rather than 'lecture us on our opinions, attitudes and whatever misconceptions about the progress of the narrative we may be holding to', many footnotes in *Tom Jones* succeed in de-stabilising the reader and in making him think less straightforwardly than he would with simple 'auctoriales' instructions (Benstock, p. 210); the irony has the effect of making the reader question the text and its statements rather than accept them at face value. Genette's definition of fictional notes thus corresponds to the footnotes found in *Tom Jones*: 'Les notes fictionnelles, sous le couvert d'une simulation plus ou moins satirique de paratexte, contribuent à la fiction du texte' (*Seuils*, p. 314).

In *A Tale of A Tub*, the question of voice, of who is speaking in the notes continues to create problems of interpretation. Frank Palmeri and Jean-Paul Forster analyse the problem in depth; their studies go in the same direction even if they reach slightly different

conclusions.⁸ In response to the *Tale*, in which he was represented as a 'typically pedantic and literal-minded modern critic', William Wotton wrote a 'hostile but plodding explication of the allegorical narrative of the brothers as Christian churches, and [...] an attack on the *Tale* as a satire of the Anglican church' in his *Defense of the Reflections upon Ancient and Modern Learning, in Answer to the Objections of Sir W. Temple, and Others: With Observations upon The Tale of a Tub* (1705, Palmeri, p. 251). Forster adds that '[Wotton's *Defense* is] the most explicit reaction of all that have come down to us, and, above all, it is the very reaction that led Swift to extend the scope of his satirical fiction by adding the footnotes' (Forster, p. 27). Thus, in the fifth edition of the *Tale* (1710), Swift added 'An Apology / For the, & c.' in which he defends his work as being a satire on religious delusions, and not an attack on the Anglican church, and a great number of footnotes (*Tale*, pp. 3-20). He introduces these additional footnotes as if they were written by others than himself:

The Author is informed, that the Bookseller has prevailed on several Gentlemen, to write some explanatory Notes, for the goodness of which he is not to answer, having never seen any of them, nor intends it, till they appear in Print, when it is not unlikely he may have the Pleasure to find twenty Meanings, which never enter'd into his Imagination. (Tale, p. 20)

Yet the notes are written or included by the same author as that of the rest of the text of *A Tale of A Tub*, Jonathan Swift, anonymous at the time.⁹ Swift's narrator misleadingly presents these notes as 'explanatory Notes' for which he is not responsible. This allows him to suggest to the reader's mind that, rather than providing a clear and reliable explanation for the book, the footnotes add strangeness and a multiplicity of meanings and

⁸ Jean-Paul Forster, 'Swift and Wotton: The Unintended Mousetrap', *Swift Studies: The Annual of the Ehrenpreis Center*, 7 (1992), 23-35.

⁹ For the problem of the authorship of the notes in *A Tale of a Tub*, see the Introduction by the editors (*Tale*, 'II. Authorship', pp. xiv-xix, and 'The Notes' pp. xxii-xxv).

interpretations to the text which may not even correspond to the original design. This is happily welcomed by the author since it adds to the complexity of his book, and gives him an opportunity to satirise modern critics and their critical notes which often miss or distort the meaning intended by the author. Swift's narrator writes in a footnote: '† *Nothing is more frequent than for Commentators to force Interpretation, which the Author never meant*' (*Tale*, p. 186). The apology and the notes were also printed together in a pamphlet 'that was issued in the following year and could be bound up with the earlier editions' (*Tale*, Introduction. xxiii). Swift's footnotes appear unique in their number, artfulness, dialogical nature, complexity and power to confuse the reader and undermine both the text and the notes themselves. The footnotes combine several voices, about a quarter of which are extracted directly from Wotton's criticism and explanations of the allegory (Palmeri, p. 251). These are turned against themselves because Swift uses the most obvious and short-sighted explanations from Wotton's work:

Wotton's notes make explicit the uncomplicated, one-to-one correspondences between the history of Christianity and the history of the three brothers in Swift's allegory [...]. Thus repeated, 'W. Wotton' comes to designate a mechanical, unimaginative but self-important annotator. (Palmeri, pp. 251-52)

The other main voice in the footnotes is that of an 'anonymous and fictitious commentator' (Forster, p. 29). These unsigned notes (those that do not bear the name of Wotton) are categorised by the editors of the 1958 edition of *A Tale of a Tub* as follows:

They have different purposes. In one place there is a rebuke to the author [p.42]; in another he is corrected in a matter of fact [p. 67]; in another his judgement is not approved [p. 250]. Sometimes they explain why there are chasms in the manuscript [pp. 62, 170]; on two occasions they deal with the date at which a passage was written [pp. 86, 208]. Usually they profess to explain the author's meaning; they provide some information about books referred to in the text; and for the ease of the reader Latin quotations are given in the English of a standard version, such as Creech's *Lucretius* and Dryden's *Virgil* [pp. 55, 60, 100]. (Editors' introduction, *Tale*, pp. xxiv-v)

Forster recognises in these notes Swift's assimilation of the positive criticism he received from Edmund Curll in *A Complete Key to the Tale of a Tub; with some Account of the Authors, the Occasion and Design of Writing it, and Mr. Wotton's Remarks Examined* (Forster, p. 27). There is also one critical commentary by Lambin (Dionysius Lambinus), a French classical scholar of the sixteenth century (*Tale*, p. 73). Palmeri explains that 'both sets of notes [the unsigned ones and Wotton's] satirize the kind of annotation that characterizes the early stage of footnoting – the critical and skeptical annotation of adversaries' texts' (Palmeri, p. 251). Forster comments upon the two sets of footnotes:

When Wotton spots an allegorical feature, he tends to translate it into historical and doctrinal terms. Like Curll's *Key*, the fictional annotator is more inclined to think in terms of customs and practices. [...] Swift's fictitious annotator, like the *Key*, stresses the excessive emphasis put on appearances, on the effects of doctrines on life, not on the questions of doctrine or tradition. (Forster, p. 30)

The differences between the two sets of footnotes should not be exaggerated, however. Both show evidence of a pedantic tendency to make the obvious explicit. They also agree whenever they touch upon the subject of the brothers' interpretation of the father's will. (Forster, p. 29)

Carried away by the display of his own scholarship, Wotton overlooks the fanciful dimension of the tale, and he misconstrues the impossibility of reading it as a precise allegory. On the other hand, Swift's fictitious and anonymous annotator can sometimes be accused of being too bold in his explanations, as well as of being a little too fond of scandal and too mercenary, like Curll, so that his contribution is not entirely satisfactory, either. (Forster, p. 30)

Forster makes it clear that the footnotes are there, not to clarify the meaning of the text, but rather to show more powerfully that *A Tale of a Tub* was not, as Wotton and other readers would have it, 'the straightforward expression of its author's ideas' (Forster, p. 27). He believes that 'Swift had conceived his *Tale* as a bogus treatise to frighten critics away, as a mock-allegory which was not meant to be decoded literally', as Wotton attempted to do (Forster, p. 28).

Frank Palmeri explains that the first four editions of the *Tale* only contained a few marginal references, such as 'Herodot L. 4' (*Tale*, pp. 147, 149). The editors of the 1958

Clarendon edition explain that the placement of the second series of notes at the bottom of the page is due to Benjamin Tooke, one of Swift's publishers, who advised Swift against placing the notes at the end of the fifth edition of *A Tale of a Tub* as a Key together with the 'Apology' (*Tale*, p. xxiii). It is interesting to notice that, although the marginal notes are less elaborate than the footnotes which were added to the fifth edition, they were nevertheless kept by Swift along with the footnotes. For this reason, they cannot be dismissed. In addition, they are more diverse and in tune with the footnotes than the simple extratextual reference given by Palmeri leads ones to think. There are several references to other authors and works, which are in the same line as the one quoted by Palmeri, as for instance: '*Hor.' (*Tale*, p. 43); '*Plutarch' (*Tale*, p. 50); '*Vid. Xenoph.' (*Tale*, p. 51); '*See Virgil translated, &c.' (*Tale*, p. 72); '*Pausan. L. 8' (*Tale*, p. 154). Some of these marginal notes also give short clarifications, but they are not neutral: they humorously take part in the satire. When, for example, the narrator talks about the project of comparing 'Books, both as to *Weight and Number*', he recalls the proposal 'which *Archimedes* made upon a *smaller* Affair', and we read in the margin: '*Viz. about moving the Earth' (*Tale*, p. 64). Comparing books quantitatively is seen as a bigger challenge (or a more ridiculous one) than moving the earth, which is euphemistically called a '*small* Affair'. But the whole process makes sense if one is of the opinion that the Moderns' works can only surpass the ancients' by their size and not by their quality. Earlier on in the preface, the narrator explains that, since modern writers gather all their wit in the preface or the dedication in order to attract the reader, these are the only parts worth studying in their works:

When I went thro' That necessary and noble †Course of Study, I had the happiness to observe many such egregious Touches, which I shall not injure the Authors by transplanting: Because I have remarked, that nothing is so very tender as a *Modern* Piece of Wit, and which is apt to suffer so much in the Carriage. (*Tale*, p. 43)

The note in the margin reinforces the irony by recalling and insisting that the 'necessary and noble course of study' of Modern literary works is: '† Reading Prefaces, &c.'. In his parody of modern occultism, the narrator mentions the author of *Dr. Faustus*, who published his work 'in the *nine hundred eighty fourth Year of his Age', and the marginal note reads: '*He lived a thousand' (*Tale*, p. 68). This note cannot be seen as a reliable and objective annotation; it is part and parcel of the fictional game, and it parallels the seeming mad rambling of the narrator in the main text. Some marginal notes are polemical since they turn the complex and mysterious satiric images of the main text into direct or personal satire by specifying whom or what is being attacked. For instance, the 'Husks and [...] Harlots' who keep the 'two Prodigals' from their parents are: '*Virtuoso Experiments, and Modern Comedies' (*Tale*, p. 65). One of the moderns who waste their time listing the weaknesses of the ancients' works is identified in the margin: '*See Wotton of Antient and Modern Learning' (*Tale*, p. 96). The unimportant author who believes that the modern critics' writings are 'the Mirrors of Learning' is named: '*A Quotation after the manner of a great Author. Vide Bently's Dissertation, &c.' (*Tale*, p. 102). The narrator informs the reader that the 'dark authors' of the age, are also called 'the *true illuminated (that is to say, the Darkest of all)' which is also, as the note clarifies, '*A Name of the Rosycrucians' (*Tale*, p. 186).¹⁰ Finally, there are notes which refer to the text as text, or, rather, which point to the absence of written text. Where the text of 'the old Slavonian Proverb' is replaced by asterisks, the marginal note comically reads: '*Desunt non-nulla*' (*Tale*, p. 200). Some marginal notes are double tracked by a footnote which refers to the absence of text more lengthily. For instance, the narrator attempts to give detailed explanations about his

¹⁰ For a detailed analysis of satirical elements in *A Tale of A Tub*, see Miriam Kosh Starkman, *Swift's Satire on Learning in A Tale of a Tub* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1950), p. 44.

three oratory machines, but when he comes to explaining why the Ladder is ‘an adequate Symbol of *Faction*’, one only finds asterisks instead of the explanation, and the marginal note reads: ‘*Hiatus in MS*’ (*Tale*, p. 62). One finds a similar comment in another of the marginal notes: ‘**The Title Page in the Original was so torn, that it was not possible to recover several Titles which the Author here speaks of*’ (*Tale*, p. 71). This implies that the marginal note is supposed to have been written by someone reading the author’s manuscript, noticing the blank and reporting it, like some sort of editor. Since the marginal note is written by the same hand as the main text, it means that the narrator is shown as having chosen not to write the explanation at all, thus questioning the importance of the arguments developed if some can deliberately be done away with. But the game goes further in the footnote:

**Here is pretended a Defect in the Manuscript, and this is very frequent with our Author, wither when he thinks he cannot say any thing worth Reading, or when he has no mind to enter on the Subject, or when it is a Matter of little Moment, or perhaps to amuse his Reader (whereof he is frequently very fond) or lastly, with some Satyrical Intention.* (*Tale*, p. 62)

One can notice that the reasons invoked by the editorial voice of the footnote – which is supposed to have been written by a different hand, since it judges both the main text and the marginal note – question the seriousness and the authority of the ‘Author’ of the main text, since they partly imply that he is an incapable writer and a buffoon dealing with trifling matters. Moreover, the voice in the footnote calls the blank a ‘pretended’ defect, which undermines the authenticity and the authority of this marginal note, and consequently, of the other marginal notes and their editor. Thus, a dialogical relationship is established, not only between the text and the footnotes, and between the footnotes themselves, but also between the text and the marginal notes and between the footnotes and the marginal notes. The web of relationships and of contradictions across the page is thus wider – and more confusing – when one takes the overlooked marginal notes into account. In the Oxford

University Press edition of *A Tale of a Tub* (1986), the marginal notes have been merged with the footnotes at the bottom of the page, as if they were of the same nature and function. This results in a loss of clarity, but, more importantly, there is thus no longer as full an actual representation of a tripartite dialogue in textual-visual space. The full potential of Swift's game with different voices is not realised.

Since it gives several explanations for the absence of text, the footnote on page sixty-two mentioned above is in harmony with the whole text of *A Tale of a Tub*, which constantly offers many handles for the reader's interpretation. One can notice that this footnote does not openly choose one explanation as the right one for the reader to take up, rather, it gives the main reason, the satire on argumentation, as the least probable at the end of the list introduced by the adverb 'perhaps'. There is another example of this pattern which satirises learned rational and philosophical arguments. The narrator is about to offer a biological explanation for different types of madness, and, instead, one is given asterisks. The marginal note reads: '*Hic multa desiderantur*', and the footnote: '**Here is another Defect in the Manuscript, but I think the Author did wisely, and that the Matter which thus strained his Faculties, was not worth a Solution; and it were well if all Metaphysical Cobweb Problems were no otherwise answered*' (*Tale*, p. 170). Contrary to the footnotes signed 'Wotton', which offer one interpretation with a lot of assurance, many unsigned footnotes introduce doubt or hesitation as regards the meaning of the allegory by using phrases such as 'I suppose', 'it is likely', 'I believe', 'this I take to be', 'I think':

This I suppose to be understood of Mr. W-tt-ns Discourse of Antient and Modern Learning. (Tale, p. 69)

It is likely the Author, in every one of these Changes in the Brothers' Dresses, refers to some particular Error in the Church of Rome [...]. (Tale, p. 86)

I believe this refers to that part of the Apocrypha where mention is made of Tobit and his Dog. (Tale, p. 87)

This I take to be the Office of Indulgences, the gross Abuses whereof first gave Occasions for the Reformation. (Tale, p. 108)

Others offer a number of possibilities, or confess the commentator's incapacity to interpret some passages in the text:

This considerable Student is adorned with many other Qualities, upon which, at present, I shall not farther enlarge. -- **Heark in your Ear* ----- I am strangely mistaken, if all this Address, his Motions, and his Airs, would not then be very natural, and in their proper Element.

**I cannot conjecture what the Author means here, or how this Chasm could be fill'd, tho' it is capable of more than one interpretation. (Tale, p. 179)*

In two Days, all Mankind appear'd closed up in Bars of †*Gold Lace* [...].

† *I cannot tell whether the Author means any new Innovation by this Word, or whether it be only to introduce the new Methods of forcing and perverting Scripture. (Tale, p. 84)*

Neither was it possible for the united Rhetoric of Mankind to prevail with him to make himself clean again: Because having consulted the Will upon this Emergency, he met with a † Passage near the Bottom (whether foisted in by the Transcriber, is not known) which seemed to forbid it.

† *I cannot guess the Author's meaning here, which I would be very glad to know, because it seems to be of Importance. (Tale, p. 191)*

Guthkelch and Smith quote the passage the latter footnote refers to in Rev. xxii. II: 'he which is filthy, let him be filthy still'. The commentator's remark on the importance of the 'Passage near the Bottom' further ridicules Peter's literal interpretation of the Scriptures which is developed in the main text. It also ridicules the commentator himself who tries to find deep meaning in a passage with scatological content, thereby satirising critics who strive to read more into a text than is there or who look for keys to the text in nonsensical passages. Guthkelch and Smith report lengthily in a note to another passage that many attempts have been made by several critics to find what Swift refers to when he introduces two malignant creatures, Camelion and Moulinavent, as being the enemies of the Aeolists and their deities:

The first of these, was the **Camelion*, sworn Foe to *Inspiration* [...].

**I do not well understand what the Author aims at here, any more than by the terrible Monster, mention'd in the following Lines, called Moulinavent, which is the French Word for a Windmill. (Tale, p. 159)*

After giving a list of possible explanations, the editors conclude:

In the second edition of his *Swift* (1824, vol. I, p. 84), after remarking that Swift's annotators have sometimes overstrained the allegory, Scott said that this passage appears to mean nothing more than that the fanatics 'spent their time in combating imaginary spiritual obstacles to their salvation, as the distempered imagination of Don Quixote converted windmills into giants'. (note to the text, *Tale*, p. 160)

In their introduction to the *Tale*, the editors mention the notes in which 'the commentator sometimes says with roguish frankness that he cannot understand the author' and add that, 'such notes are quite in Swift's manner. He enjoyed the difficulty of his book. [...] So far as they go the notes often give valuable help. But there are still many things to be explained; and this is as Swift intended' (*Tale*, p. xxv). The footnote about '*Anima Magica Abscondita*', for example, criticises the author for giving unclear or wrong references in the text: '*I believe one of the Authors Designs was to set curious Men a hunting thro' Indexes, and enquiring for Books out of the common Road*' (*Tale*, p. 187). In *A Tale of a Tub*, the reader is given several voices, which sometimes go in the same direction. For instance, there are marginal notes which reinforce the satire as we have seen above. There are footnotes which almost parallel the ideas developed in the main text: about the Chapel of Loretto (*Tale*, p. 120); about the Aeolists (*Tale*, p. 156); about prefaces (*Tale*, p. 181); and about the interpretation of texts (*Tale*, p. 186). There are footnotes which run parallel to other footnotes: about Constantine the Great (*Tale*, pp. 90-91); about holy water (*Tale*, p. 109); and about the use of the scriptures (*Tale*, pp. 190-91). But the relationship between the different voices is often that of rectification, contradiction, and invalidation, with no attempt to provide any partial or final resolution. The reader faces a large number of possible combinations between the several voices across the page, and the pattern is not regular or predictable. Therefore, instead of offering a single clarifying authoritative voice, the notes 'extend the unresolved dialogue between opposite positions and languages in the

Tale' (Palmeri, p. 252). Commenting on Swift's and Gibbon's use of footnotes, Palmeri concludes:

Unlike the marginal glosses and references to Scripture in Burnet's *Sacred Theory* or Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, the satiric footnotes in Swift and Gibbon do not recognize a sacred authority or a delegated representative; by ironically citing authorities who are unhallowed, fallen, and debunked, these footnotes imply that no source of indisputable spiritual or cultural authority exists. [...] their satiric and self-parodic footnotes register an absence of sacred authority, and establish their disputable, divided authority in the realm of the supplementarity, the secular, and the dialogical. (p. 259)

Thus, the text and the footnotes in the *Tale* offer a number of perspectives, none of which directly expresses the author's opinion. Palmeri states that Swift's position has to be 'extrapolated from the intersection of parodied voices', since in such a parodic and satiric text, Swift can only 'establish [his] own authority indirectly' (Palmeri, pp. 253, 255). The meaning – or meanings – of the various ideas and images one finds in *A Tale of a Tub* cannot be found on the page as such, it does not arise from a linear reading of the text, nor is it directly projected in the reader's imagination. Instead, it has to be constructed by a cross-analysis of the various parts of the text on the page in order to take shape. Meaning is suspended in time and space for much longer than it is in texts which do not possess this complex mock-critical apparatus. As Forster states: 'By supplying discrepant explanations in notes, which, in addition, have an ambiguous relationship to the text, Swift blurs the traditional distinction between text and interpretation' (Forster, p. 33). The text is fictional, and Wotton's interpretation of the *Tale* is made fictional as it is turned into an additional satirical tool alongside the anonymous notes. As a result of Swift's desire to fight against misleading interpretations of his text as a straightforward allegory, the multiplicity of satirical voices, and the number of possibilities of interpretations each of these voices offers, makes it difficult to construct one definite meaning: one is left with probabilities more than with solutions to the text, one is left looking for a voice of authority.

What differentiates fictional footnotes from critical notes, or 'auctoriales' additions to the fictional text, is their indispensability once they are added to the text. Genette describes all footnotes as being optional for the reader to consult:

Il faut surtout observer que, plus encore que la préface, les notes peuvent être statutairement de lecture facultative, et ne s'adresser par conséquent qu'à certains lecteurs: ceux qu'intéressera telle ou telle considération complémentaire, ou digressive, sont le caractère accessoire justifié précisément le rejet en note. (*Seuils*, p. 297)

Footnotes are, by their nature, detached from the main text at the bottom of the page, easily overlooked. Since these notes parody critical and scholarly footnotes, their narrative voice has a different intonation from that of the narrative voice in the main text: it sounds more editorial and authoritative. Yet, as we have seen in *Tom Jones*, fictional footnotes are not a mere 'accessoire' to the main text: they can be seen as a harmonious partner to it, as they are written by the same author with a similar creative purpose and fulfil parallel functions to those of the main text (such as comedy, irony, satire, misdirection, nonsense and subversion). Fictional footnotes bring with them a different yet indispensable perspective since they are in a different time- and space-zone than the main text's compact and linear block. For example, because of their naïveté, Wotton's notes act as a foil to the complexity of the other notes and, most of all, to the main text. Footnotes in *A Tale of a Tub* are numerous and complex, they possess their own internal logic and they are puzzling since they do not solve the mysteries of the text, but rather add theirs to it. As Forster suggests:

[...] the notes draw attention to themselves. As a result, they have shifted the focus of the satire. In the original edition, this had been the desire to shine in society and the cult of appearances which had corrupted religion and knowledge. The footnotes, however, put the emphasis on interpretation and the vanity of interpreters, which inevitably introduces an element of confusion. (Forster, p. 34)

In *A Tale of a Tub*, far more than in *Tom Jones*, the fictional power of the footnotes is so strong that the book cannot be read with the same approach or focus of interest with or

without the footnotes: in effect, the footnotes make it a different book. Forster believes that their inclusion added to the confusion of the *Tale* and was a failure on Swift's part to 'correct the impression he had made in the earlier version' since 'several influential critics had already read him, and others continued to read him, more literally than he had intended them to' (Forster, p. 35). Yet, they are a unique artistic achievement in prose fiction, which probably inspired Fielding, Sterne and Pope to use one or several mock critical annotators at a slight distance from the main text in order to raise further questions about the acts of writing, reading and interpreting fictional texts.

In *Tom Jones* the footnotes mainly extend the irony and the satire of the narratorial voice in the main text, and create doubts in the reader's mind about his own reading of the work, but they are not turned against the main text or its narrator. In *Tristram Shandy*, as in *A Tale of a Tub*, the problem of voice in the footnotes is more complex. In Swift, some footnotes comment on the main text as external editorial footnotes would, others are turned against the main narrative voice, as well as against the voice in the marginal notes. They correct it, oppose it or pretend not to understand it, and in both books they involve more than one type of commentator and more than one interpretation.

There are very few straightforward explanatory footnotes in *Tristram Shandy*: on pentagraphs (*TS*, p. 85); on Capitouls (*TS*, p. 600); and about Cervantes's hand (*TS*, p. 780). There is a handful of references to other books which are of a similar type to those found in the marginal notes in *A Tale of a Tub*, such as '*Vid. Locke' (*TS*, p. 224); '*Vide Menagiana, vol. I' (*TS*, p. 357); and 'Vid. Swinburn on Testaments, Part 7. § 8.' (*TS*, p. 390). Yet, *Tristram Shandy*, more than any other book, raises the question of the pertinence of references to other works at the margin of a texts of prose fiction. The number of Sterne's unacknowledged borrowings from other books assimilated in his narrative largely,

and, it would be tempting to say, ridiculously outnumbers the few references the reader is given in the footnotes. Moreover, if one undertook to follow every thread of thought to its origin and check every reference to the areas of knowledge mentioned in passing by Tristram, one would run two major risks. One would expose oneself as an object of the comedy of the book in a similar way to Tristram, whose frustrating obsession with searching for the cause or origin of every event or theory related to his life results in his rarely being able to complete what he undertakes. More to the point, one would risk being misled. Sterne copied his sources in a careless way. As Melvyn New and Norman Fry explain: 'Sterne was a rapid and inaccurate copier'.¹¹ Moreover, some mistakes seem to have been made or left consciously because of their comic or irreverent impact. Thus, one reads 'religiosissimus', instead of 'irreligiosissimus'; this was copied as such from the entry under Luther in Bayle's *Dictionary*, which means that Luther died 'wholly religious' (footnote, *TS*, IV, p. 311). Tristram also likes to cover his tracks by giving false references as, for example, the footnote: '*Vid. *Pellegrina*' (*TS*, VI 2, p. 498). He makes up whole quotations and references – the most elaborate example being the footnote in which Tristram pretends to give the original text in Latin of '*Hafen Slawkenbergius de Nasis*' (*TS*, IV, p. 288). Another note in 'Slawkenbergius's Tale' is a nonsensical amalgamation of pseudo-legal short Latin phrases and abbreviations which Work calls 'a burlesque of pedantic authority-citing' (*TS*, IV, p. 310).¹² New and Fry explain that in order to put this note together 'Sterne culled the margins of Swinburne [*'s A Briefe Treatise of Testaments and Last Willes*], or a similar legal treatise' ('Some Borrowings...', p. 325). They point to

¹¹ See the problems raised by Sterne's borrowings from other works in: Melvyn New and Norman Fry, 'Some Borrowings in *Tristram Shandy*: The Textual Problem', *Studies in Bibliography*, 29 (1976), 322-30 (p. 323).

¹² Laurence Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, ed. by James A. Work (New York: Odyssey Press, 1940), p. 260.

the bawdiness of the note which contains several suggestive names such as 'Luxius' and 'Koinshoven'. They conclude that 'it is difficult to know when to stop' trying to establish for certain Sterne's source and what he refers to, this being an extreme example of the problem one stumbles across throughout *Tristram Shandy* ('Some borrowings...', p. 326). The fictional footnotes in *Tristram Shandy* which imitate non-fictional traditional scholarly intertextual references and quotations strikingly show that one cannot annotate a work of fiction in the same way as one can a historical, theological or legal document. This is because the authority of a work of fiction comes from within itself rather than from external sources; it comes from the author's original imaginative power which cannot be classified, rather than from its association with other established works and standards. A fictional work such as Sterne's freely builds upon, swallows, adapts and makes its own external fictional and non-fictional material; its content does not have to be verified and checked against facts, dates, external authorities and sources. The footnote about Milton's work in *Tom Jones* treated above is in the same vein since, instead of giving the reference expected, it criticises the length of the book and makes the reader understand that it is pointless to try and look for it at all (*TJ*, VI 14, p. 321).

There are also a couple of cross-references to earlier parts of the book which break the referential illusion, as many other devices do in *Tristram Shandy*, by reminding the reader that he is reading a printed book (*TS*, III 1, p. 185, VIII 1, p. 655). The two reminders look like a drop in the ocean, since Tristram's digressive and interrupted narrative calls for much more help to allow the reader to follow the thread of the story – when there is one. They are an inconsistent editorial attempt at bringing some continuity in the reader's mind in a text which verges on chaos. One feels that they achieve the opposite effect to that wanted. Their scarcity points at the discontinuity of the story line and at all the links which are missing.

The note which recalls the beginning of a conversation between Toby and Walter bridges the gap between two volumes of the book (*TS*, II 18, p. 169); but, more to the point, it intensifies the tantalising game of the narrator, who allows himself to start a conversation in a chapter, to interrupt it, and to make his readers wait for a future instalment to carry on with it. As we investigated in our study of progression and continuity in *Tristram Shandy* in chapter three, the game carries on for several volumes where similar short phrases are repeated, thus, in the end, creating frustration and some irritation in the reader who is kept in suspense without a real purpose. The second cross-reference bridges the gap between three volumes, only, it seems, to send the reader back to admire Tristram's graphic achievement which fancifully represent the progression of his story in the five previous volumes. Thus, these reminders seem to point in a teasing way at the oddities of the narrative rather than seriously helping the processes of reading.

Genette makes a hasty distinction between the fictional voice in the text and the 'auctoriale' voice in the footnotes in *Tom Jones*. In *Tristram Shandy*, Genette makes another distinction. He believes that there are footnotes which have a plausible ('tout à fait vraisemblable') 'auctoriale' function. He calls these 'actoriales fictives, généralement attribuées à un personnage narrateur, comme le sont deux ou trois dans *Tristram Shandy* (à propos de son père)'. He refers here to the footnotes written by Tristram as a fictional character and narrator, which, he claims, interfere with the other footnotes which he attributes to Laurence Sterne directly and are properly 'aCTORIALES' (*Seuils*, p. 314). Horst Zander goes in the same direction when he states that one cannot answer definitively the question where and when Sterne's own voice is heard via Tristram's, but that there are

indications in the paratext which show us that it is Sterne who is talking.¹³ It would be tempting to point out that, since Sterne is the author, it is his voice one hears throughout his literary creation, whether serious or mocking; but this does not mean to say that the author's voice comes through undisguised and unfictionalised, 'auctoriale', to criticise or overpower his narrator. Whether Sterne intends the reader to see the narrator and his pseudo-creation in a good light or whether he uses him as an object of satire, it is more rewarding fictionally to believe that he gave Tristram the necessary powers to take up different voices, disguises, to be responsible for the whole work we read and its eccentricities. The elements of Sterne's life which are included in the work imbue Tristram with characteristics of a real person and add depth and complexity to his character by giving him a place in time (on the social, historical and literary scene) and in space (where he is writing from and where he travelled to). He is a character with whom Sterne could play at identifying himself in his social and literary life. Thus, one could see the mock-editor's voice in the footnotes as a parodic voice Tristram adopts as the pseudo-author of his book, which, moreover, has the same intonations as his voice in the main text, even if it sometimes sounds more formal in order to satirise conventional devices of critical footnoting in a realistic way.

One finds at least four different approaches to 'Shandy' in the notes. Firstly, there are notes which stem from Tristram the narrator of the main text in a straightforward way, since he refers to his father in them: 'This book my father would never consent to publish; 'tis in manuscript, with some other tracts of his, in the family, all, or most of which will be printed in due time' (*TS*, V 12, p. 440); and 'This will be printed with my father's life of

¹³ Horst Zander, 'Non enim adjectio haec ejus, sed opus ipsum est: Überlegungen zum Paratext in *Tristram Shandy*', *Poetica*, 28 (1996), 132-153 (pp. 141-42).

Socrates' (*TS*, VIII 26, p. 709). This makes him the annotator of his own text, so that we could call these notes, as Genette suggests, 'auctoriale fictive', since Tristram is the pseudo-author of the book. The note which mentions 'my cousin Antony', since it refers to a family member, could be classified in the same category, yet it adds a level of complexity since it sends the reader back to Sterne's own life, as Antony was the name used by intimates to refer to Hall-Stevenson (*TS*, VII 28, p. 622).¹⁴ Identifying the speaker in the notes is more tricky when one comes across a set of footnotes, similar to the ones in *A Tale of a Tub*, which show hesitations as to the meaning of the narrator in the main text: 'Mr. Shandy must mean the poor in spirit' (*TS*, VIII 26, p. 710); or which contradict him: 'This must be a mistake in Mr. Shandy' (*TS*, IX 26, p. 791). 'Mr. Shandy' is referred to in the third person, and since he is being criticised, the notes appear bound to stem from an exterior commentator. These footnotes give Tristram a new voice, a unique opportunity to play the part of the pedantic and finicky critic who takes pains to give any unnecessary erudite details he can find in order to expose the mistakes or the lacunae of the author and his superiority as a scholar. For instance, there are notes which give Greek quotations, only, it seems, to give the appearance of learning (*TS*, V 28, pp. 461-62). In addition, there are Latin quotations which are borrowed second-hand from the marginal notes of the works of Burton and Swinburne (*TS*, IV 29, p. 391, VIII 24, p. 706). One also finds in the footnotes large extracts from documents in French taken from other works simply for Tristram to back up some of the comments he makes in the main text (*TS*, IV 10, pp. 337-38, VI 2, p. 494). One needs to keep in mind that the notes in the third person are written by the narrator playfully wearing the mask of the critic. Then, rather than undermining his authority, the notes can be seen as another way and another place for Tristram to show off

¹⁴ Concerning Hall-Stevenson, see the editors' note (*TS*, vol. III, note 622.6-9, pp. 477-9).

his skills. In effect, he presents himself as an author who wishes to control and juggle with any narrative technique and persona at his disposal in order to throw his reader out of balance by doing away with stable landmarks. One of the notes which expresses hesitation is clearly self-defeating since its purpose is to give an uninteresting detail about a character mentioned in the text, but one reads asterisks instead of the alternative the mock-commentator wishes to put forward: 'Mr. Shandy is supposed to mean ***** *** **, Esq; member for *****, — and not the Chinese Legislator' (*TS*, V 25, p. 457). Swift's narrator uses an inverted technique as, when the commentator in the note notices the asterisks in the text instead of what should have been the development of an argument, he implies that the problem was not worth bothering about anyway (*Tale*, p. 170). Having the narrator do the criticism of his own text himself in the notes turns into ridicule the type of critical interpretation of fictional texts which deals with matters of very little relevance to the quality of the story or to the author's skills. These footnotes are triple-edged since they are directed towards the main text itself as they pretend to undermine the authority of its narrator. They aim at parodying scholarly footnotes, and they also contain a satire of events and people exterior to the text and topical in Sterne's day. For instance, the note which deals with 'Lithopædus' in volume two, chapter nineteen, parodies an outburst of rivalry between Burton and Smellie over Smellie's having been caught by Burton copying some of the authorities he cites without reading them. This led Smellie to misspell 'Lithopædii' and to turn the title of the drawing of a petrified child into the name of an author.¹⁵ In such pedantic notes, *A Tale of a Tub* and *Tristram Shandy* comically imitate and distort the style of the people or professions they want to satirise by directly weaving sections of the satirised discourse into their texts, even if, in the process of making these sections theirs,

¹⁵ For a detailed analysis of this rivalry, see the editors' note (*TS*, vol. III, note 176.1, pp. 199-200).

they take the risk of subverting their own authority in the eyes of the inattentive reader who might not recognise the satire. Finally, in both books, the reader is caught in the mock-fight for authority between the narratorial voice of the main text and the undermining editorial voice of the footnotes – knowing at the same time that, since the footnotes are fictional, they are no more to be trusted than the main text. Therefore, comedy arises more from the unstable position the reader finds himself in than from the comments made in the notes themselves. It is through him and at his expense that the game takes shape.

Other notes appear to emanate from an external commentator since ‘Mr. Shandy’ is followed by a verb in the third person singular: ‘Mr. *Shandy* returns thanks to the chapter clerk of the dean’ (*TS*, III 11, p. 202); ‘Mr. *Shandy*’s compliments to orators — is very sensible that *Slawkenbergius* has here changed his metaphor — which he is very guilty of; — that as a translator, Mr. *Shandy* has all along done what he could to make him stick to it — but that here ‘twas impossible’ (*TS*, IV *Slawkenbergius*’s Tale, p. 303). Benstock changes the grammatical structure of the last quotation in her article and, thereby, its meaning, by reducing it to: ‘Mr. Shandy’s compliments to orators — is very sensible’ and classifies it as an ‘extra-authorial intrusion’ (Benstock, p. 209). Yet these notes are a formal and rather pompous way of expressing thanks or compliments and they are uttered by Tristram as Tristram, and not as an external commentator. There is an example in the main text where Tristram refers to himself in the third person which supports this view. After giving the text of the ‘Memoire présenté a Messieurs les Docteurs de Sorbonne’, Tristram compliments the ‘Docteurs’ on their efforts in the main text. He adds his own suggestion towards solving the problem of baptism using one long intricate sentence, putting together many arguments introduced with ‘That’, which parodies the Docteurs’ style:

Mr. *Tristram Shandy*’s compliments to Messr. *Le Moyne* [...], hopes they all rested well the night after so tiresome a consultation. — He begs to know,

whether, after the ceremony of marriage, and before that of consummation [...], That if the HOMUNCULI do well [...], That each and every of them shall be baptized again [...]. (*TS*, II 20, pp. 69-70)

The various styles of address found in the notes are confusing to the reader who expects footnotes to offer a reliable, stable and uniform annotator. Instead, one is given a slippery and unpredictable self-parodic and satirical jester who adopts different masks and makes the reader constantly wonder: who is talking? Tristram is the master-memory who holds all the threads of his narrative in his mind. He can picture himself as being in several places at the same time and also reconcile past, present and future and different locations in a sentence. He addresses his reader and he is capable of creating, not just one, but several fictional interlocutors to whom he gives tasks to do and on whom he checks. He conjures non-fictional friends such as Eugenius with whom he can have a second look at what he has written in earlier chapters. He appears inside the text as a character, and outside the text as its creator or pseudo-author. The footnotes are an outstanding tool which allow him to appear outside the main text with more distance as a reader and critical commentator of his own work. The voice in the footnotes of an external commentator on the text which is fictionalised and recognised as belonging to the pseudo-author of the text is one of the many voices which belong to different levels of diegesis and intersect in the fiction, creating metalepses throughout the book. Thus, in the main text, Tristram as the pseudo-author comments on his text as text; he also directly addresses his readers; his fictionalised readers are made to intervene in the story and to comment upon it, and his characters have a direct impact on their creator's behaviour. The frontier between diegetical and extradiegetical worlds – the world of the story (or diegesis) and the world of the teller, the critic and the reader – collapses when traditional literary and scholarly methods and contents are used for comical and parodic purposes. Fictional footnotes are one more way in which this happens in *Tristram Shandy*. In fact, the dialogue between different

interlocutors belonging to various diegetical levels seems to have replaced the structuring elements usually brought in by a plot. *Tristram Shandy* is a book in which different voices appear to intersect at a particular point in space on the page rather than to develop progressively on the line of time. Fictional footnotes have a crucial role in that they expand the area in which this phenomenon happens on the page.

Footnotes constitute a new and important time-line which branches out from the main text and interrupts its flow to take the reader in a different direction on a new basis and with different rules: those of footnotes, even if they are fictional and if, as a result, their authoritative function is distorted. They are a way of bringing more freedom to the world of fiction since they open up a new space and a new time-line for the fiction to spread into. As fiction usurps the space which belonged to non-fiction, fictional footnotes restructure the reading page and offer both the narrator and the reader a new perspective on the text. Iser explains that there are usually four main perspectives in a text:

those of the narrator, the characters, the plot, and the fictitious reader. [...] What they do is to provide guidelines originating from different starting points [...], continually shading into each other and devised in such a way that they all converge on a general meeting place. We call this meeting place the meaning of the text, which can be brought into focus if it is visualized from a standpoint'.¹⁶

Prose fictions which contain fictional footnotes offer a fifth perspective to the reader, which must be taken into account if one wants to have full access to the meaning of the text. In *Tristram Shandy*, fictional footnotes are relevant to the scheme of the book since they mark a further attempt at breaking the linearity of the narrative and the illusion of a continuous reading process: they go towards offering discontinuity in time and simultaneity in space. Footnotes run parallel to the main text, so that the two appear like contrapuntal melody

¹⁶ Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1978), p. 35.

lines. The *Grove Dictionary* gives a precise definition of counterpoint, which it dates back to the fourteenth century, and which is simply: 'note against note'.¹⁷ One can find broader definitions of counterpoint, such as 'the art of combining two or more independent melodic lines';¹⁸ and, it is 'practically synonymous with polyphony [...], except for a difference of emphasis, the term polyphony being preferred in connection with early music (medieval polyphony), the term counterpoint in connection with the 16th- to 18th-century period (Palestrina, Bach)'.¹⁹ Unlike in music, where two melodic lines can be heard simultaneously, the main text and the notes cannot be read at the same time, due to the quasi-linear progression of the eyes over a printed text. Yet, because of the subordinate position of the footnotes, the reader's mind almost automatically registers the footnote as a parenthesis to the text, the main text remaining the primary locus of attention. As a result, as he is reading the note, the reader cannot help but keep the main text fresh at the forefront of his mind almost simultaneously, in order both to perceive the relevance of the note to the text and to be able to come back to the main text without having lost track. Moreover, when the reader comes back to the main text, he superimposes the impact of the footnote onto what he was reading in the main text, so that, as he reads the main text again, the text of the footnote lingers in parallel to it in his mind for a while. Finally, if the footnote is critical of the main text – which is the case in *A Tale of a Tub* and in *Tristram Shandy*, since some footnotes turn against the text and undermine the authority of the narrator – it is bound to transform the 'melody' the main text would have played in the reader's mind if he had not

¹⁷ Oliver B. Ellsworth, 'Countrapunctus', <http://www.grovemusic.com>, ed. by Laura Macy, accessed 29 July 2001.

¹⁸ *Everyman's Dictionary of Music*, compiled by Eric Bloom, revised by Sir Jack Westrup (first published 1947, Hertfordshire: Book Club Associates, 1975), p. 139.

¹⁹ *The Harvard Brief Dictionary of Music*, compiled by Willi Apel and Ralph T. Daniel (Harvard University Press edition 1960, New York: Paper Books, 1972), p. 72.

read the note. Within the main text, Sterne often creates what Freedman calls 'unilinear counterpoint', as he often comes close to counterpoint in the reader's imagination despite the linearity and the sequentiality of the written text:

Sterne's achievement in *Tristram Shandy* [...] may be regarded as a literary counterpart of Bach's determination to force polyphony out of a solo instrument [...]: an effort to compel that instrument to transcend its limitations and produce polyphonic effects within a single line – the sense of simultaneity within linear succession.²⁰

For instance, Tristram leaves his mother peeping behind the door, deals with other matters, and, when he comes back to her later, he makes sure the reader is under the impression that she has been waiting there all this time (*TS*, V 5 to 13). In *Tristram Shandy*, the narrator self-consciously and proficiently uses musical terms, which makes this analysis all the more pertinent. For example, Tristram gives a mock-technical musical analysis of Phutatorius's interjection (*TS*, IV 26, p. 378). He raises the reader's awareness to the musical instructions with which Yorick annotates his sermons (*TS*, VI 11, p. 515). He devotes a whole chapter to pseudo-fiddle sounds and expresses, in a language laden with sexual innuendoes, his love for music and the joy it gives him (*TS*, V 13, p. 442). The chapters in which Tristram introduces his uncle Toby's whistle are a striking musical illustration of the polyphony mentioned above. From volume three, chapter six onwards, the narrator keeps reminding the reader that his uncle is whistling, while he deals with other matters, and while other characters are talking. At the end of volume three, chapter ten, Dr. Slop starts reading Ernulphus's curse, and the fact that the two actions are meant to be concomitant until the end of the chapter is reinforced by Toby's assimilation of Dr. Slop's speech to his music:

²⁰ William Freedman, *Laurence Sterne and the Origins of the Musical Novel* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1978), p. 64.

'[...] May he be cursed in living, in dying'. [Here my uncle *Toby* taking the advantage of a *minim* in the second barr of his tune, kept whistling one continual note to the end of the sentence — Dr. *Slop* with his division of curses moving under him, like a running bass all the way]. (*TS*, III 11, pp. 208-09)

The impression of the simultaneity of the various voices and actions is made possible because, in *Tristram Shandy*, the pseudo-author has clearly identified and separated their different durations and made them both independent and interconnected. Moreover the pace of his narrative is fast and there are constant interruptions and digressions so that scenes alternate, juxtapose and often overlap rapidly and without transitions on the page and in the reader's imagination. The overlapping of various voices is made easier by the use of dashes, semicolons and brackets. This punctuation allows expansion and the inclusion of phrases in a sentence without clear-cut or definite separations between them, and without breaking the pace of the narration. Finally, as we established in chapter one of the thesis, the pseudo-author boasts about possessing all scenes, voices, locations, and durations simultaneously in his creative mind. Thus, they can all merge in the present of the narration:

[...] whilst *Obadiah* has been going those said miles and back, I have brought my uncle *Toby* from *Namur*, quite across all *Flanders*, into *England*: [...] I have had him ill upon my hands near four years; --- and have since travelled him and Corporal *Trim* [...] a journey of near two hundred miles down into *Yorkshire*; — all which put together, must have prepared the reader's imagination for the entrance of Dr. *Slop* upon the stage, — as much, at least, (I hope) as a dance, a song, or a concerto between the acts. (*TS*, II 8, p. 120)

Since a written work finds its dynamism and its actualisation in its creator's mind and in the reader's imagination, the linearity of the words on the page should not be seen as an impossible barrier to effects of simultaneity in fiction. Effects of simultaneity in written fiction are all the more precious as they reduce the gap between written works of art and musical or representational works of art, and between art and life.

If counterpoint is the art of combining two independent melodic lines, one can question the relevance of the comparison made above about the relationship between text and footnotes, since they are in a relation of dependence, the footnote being subordinate to the main text by its position at the bottom of the page, the small size of its typescript, its short length, and the sign which makes it spring from and attaches it to the main text. Yet, one must keep in mind that such a text as *Tristram Shandy* includes in its web many passages which are close to what could be found in a footnote, such as commentaries on the fiction, digressions, and addresses to the reader. Moreover, as one passage overtly shows in *Tristram Shandy*, the traditional distinction between text and paratext will not do, as they may even become interchangeable, not bound anymore by the traditional hierarchy. This in music is called double or invertible counterpoint, which is the term used where 'the top-and bottom position of two melodies combined in counterpoint can be reversed' (*Everyman's Dictionary*, p. 139). In volume one, chapter twenty, Tristram scolds the female reader for not having read one sentence in the previous chapter properly, the one in which he states his need to have been born before he was christened, and by which the reader should have inferred that his mother was not a Papist. There, the main text introduces an explanatory footnote on the 'Romish Rituals' of baptism, which 'direct the baptizing of the child, in cases of danger, *before* it is born', on which Tristram comments and digresses as he would in the main text (footnote, *TS*, I 20, pp. 65-66). In its turn, the footnote serves to introduce the main text on the following page. This text consists in a document on baptism. It has its own title: 'MEMOIRE présenté a Messieurs les Docteurs de SORBONNE*', and its own footnote which refers to the source of the document (*ibid.*, p. 67). The document is followed by Tristram's comment on it which puts an end to the chapter without coming

back to the original track, creating an open digression.²¹ The digression which started in the footnote changed the course of the narrative and took it over. This passage offers what Zander calls 'a seamless transition from text to paratext and back' (my translation from the German text, p. 120).

Benstock and Zander mention this phenomenon but do not comment on a further complexity introduced by it (Benstock, p. 209-10 and Zander, p. 120). When the text introduces the footnote which takes over the narrative and introduces in its turn its own main text on the next page, the reader is given a choice in his reading. On the one hand, he can get engrossed in the footnote and in the text it introduces, then move on to the next chapter. If he does this, he will have to miss a portion of text which comes in between: the paragraphs in the main text which carry on straight after the footnote sign on the same page before the main text introduced by the footnote which appears on the next page. One would have to be a very conscientious reader to then make the effort to go against the forward flow of the narrative in order to go back and read the two paragraphs over which one skipped. The flow of the text started in the footnote is overpowering; it drags the reader along with itself. The text of the footnote has taken over the main text, it does not need to be introduced by the main text with a footnote sign, it has extended its territory to the centre of the page in larger typescript, reversing the order of things. Yet, the fact that a fresh chapter dealing with Tristram's birth and staging Toby and Walter begins straight after Tristram's comment on the document re-establishes the order of things. On the other hand, if the reader chooses to ignore the footnote – which is common practice since footnotes in

²¹ Tristram often starts a topic which he drops soon after without coming back, straight away or at all, to the story he was telling before the digression. I call this phenomenon an 'open digression', adopting Gérard Genette's terminology when discussing the amplitude of analepses and prolepses. See an example of 'analepse ouverte' in Gérard Genette, *Figures III*, (Paris: Seuil, 1972), p. 87.

most works are non-fictional, thus optional – once he has read the passage after the footnote sign, the reader will stumble on the document on baptism, the ‘MEMOIRE présenté a Messieurs les Docteurs de SORBONNE*’, without knowing what led to its being there, and what its purpose is. He will then have to go back to the footnote in order to be introduced to the document more smoothly. The reader is given options which break the forward movement of the act of reading, the one with which Tristram was reproaching the female reader before the footnote. Yet, in this passage, no option is fully satisfactory since the reader has to leave some text unread, or to move forward and backward and forward again, up and down the page in order to get the full information – which truly prevents the reader from ‘reading straight-forward, [...] in quest of the adventures’ (TS, I 20, p. 65). One can experience here the full scale of Sterne’s originality and playfulness in this *exercice de style*.

From the moment footnotes are made part of the fiction, the question of their actually belonging to the paratext arises, but as Genette puts it: ‘La question n’est donc pas de savoir si la note “appartient” ou non au paratexte, mais bien s’il y a ou non avantage et pertinence à l’envisager ainsi’ (*Seuils*, p. 315). Unfortunately, Genette only devotes three pages to fictional notes, out of which one is taken up by his general conclusion on notes and paratext (non-fictional and fictional, *Seuils*, pp. 312-15). Pre- and post- textual material in fiction raises the same problem. Yet, although it would not exist if it were not to serve (or undermine) the text it is attached to, it is not in such a direct, close and regular contact with the main text as the footnotes are. It does not achieve an ongoing dialogue with the main text as footnotes do. Moreover, this material has a similar layout to that of the main text: it occupies a full page, can be as lengthy as a chapter, can even have notes attached to it, and, as a result, it can be seen as more self-sufficient and independent than footnotes can,

more on equal footing with the main text. Prefaces, apologies, and dedications were very much in fashion in the eighteenth century, and all seemed to follow a similar pattern. In his 1750 letter to 'Sir William Pennyman, and the Grand Jury of the County of York' which was first published as dedication to his second printed sermon, Sterne dismisses apologies as being trite and overused: '—Excuses of this Kind being generally so well known, both as to Substance and Form, that it is altogether unnecessary to copy them' (*Letters*, p. 24). This is what Swift mocks with his accumulation of prefatory material at the beginning of *A Tale of a Tub*, what Fielding evades by using his dedication as a preface in *Tom Jones*, and what Sterne rejects by including the preface inside the work as part of the fiction in *Tristram Shandy* and in *A Sentimental Journey*. None of them saw prefatory material as mere decorative appendage to their work and they attempted to show in their own way that it should be incorporated into the fictional world and have a creative and literary function. Fictionalising the paratext in these works is all the more acceptable because of the nature of their texts which stage a fictional narrator who is in charge of writing the book one is reading, conscious of his task and aware of his audience – an eccentric narrator who is both the receptacle of tradition, and ready to change the rules, to make a difference in the world of prose fiction.

Whether fictional footnotes belong to the paratext or not may depend on the definition one gives to paratext. If paratext is what is not part of the artistic and creative fictional text but rather what surrounds it, extends it or complements it, part of what comes *with* the fiction in order to make it more accessible to the reader, then, obviously, fictional footnotes cannot be categorised as paratext. It would be tempting to conclude that, if the notes are part of the fiction, then they are part of the main text. Moreover, however elaborate and complex they are, it is difficult to see them as being independent from the text because they

stem from it, refer to it, and, as a result, are subordinated to it; symbols or numbers attach them to the text. Thus, Genette explains about the auctorial footnote that, 'au moins lorsqu'elle se rapporte à un texte lui-même discursif avec lequel elle se trouve en relation de continuité et d'homogénéité formelle, appartient davantage au texte, qu'elle prolonge, ramifie et module plutôt qu'elle ne le commente' (*Seuils*, p. 301). Yet, because of their complex relationship with the text, fictional footnotes cannot be seen as a mere parenthesis to the text in the way 'auctoriale' notes are. Fictional footnotes do not tend to offer explanations or solutions to the text, rather, they add complications of their own, and in Swift and Sterne they comically undermine the authority of the main text and of its narrator. Moreover, footnotes are not physically part of the main text: they are at the margin of what is generally considered to be the place of fiction, at the place where one usually finds non-fictional critical commentary, which they parody. They are 'une simulation plus ou moins satirique de paratexte' (*Seuils*, p. 314). As one can infer from Genette's conclusion on the various types of notes, fictional footnotes are the most difficult to categorise, since they are neither a mere appendage to the text, nor an independent commentary on the main text:

Comme on le voit, donc, la note est, du paratexte, un élément passablement élusif et fuyant. Certains types de notes, comme l'auctoriale ultérieure ou tardive, remplissent bien une fonction paratextuelle, de commentaire défensif ou autocritique. D'autres, comme les notes originales à textes discursifs, constituent plutôt des modulations du texte, guère plus distinctes que ne serait une phrase entre parenthèses ou entre tirets. Les notes fictionnelles, sous le couvert d'une simulation plus ou moins satirique de paratexte, contribuent à la fiction du texte, quand elles ne la constituent pas de part en part [...]. Quant aux notes allographes, elles échappent de l'autre côté: non plus du texte, mais du métatexte critique, dont elles ne sont, je l'ai dit, qu'une sorte d'annexion péritextuelle, toujours éventuellement reconvertibles en commentaire autonome [...]. (*Seuils*, pp. 314-15)

As a result of their nature and position, fictional footnotes offer a detached and alternative perspective to the main text. Thus, in the sense that their function could not be

accomplished from within the main text, from within the core of the fiction, it is useful to define them as a type of paratext. Then, it is necessary to find a different or more detailed definition of paratext which would give them a category of their own in order to do away with the idea that they are optional, simply beside the text to fill its gaps by giving references, explanations and complementary information, and, instead, to show clearly that they play an active part in the fiction. In the same way as Tristram's digressions cannot be seen as a pause in the time-scheme of the narrative and as a digressive parenthesis to the main narrative line, fictional footnotes must be taken into account since they are part and parcel of the dynamics of the narration.

In the context of our study of textual progression and continuity, footnotes are seen to stretch the time-line and the space of the text to the margin in a unique way. They do this beyond the blank between the two parallel parcels of text, and this despite the fact that this margin originally belonged to a different world: that of non-fiction. In *Tristram Shandy* in particular, they further contribute to preventing the progression of the narrative into a continuous and homogeneous story line, adding to other devices which create effects of quasi-simultaneity, as we investigated in chapter three. Whether in *Tom Jones, A Tale of a Tub* or in *Tristram Shandy*, they add complexity to the process of interpretation of the main text and to the relationship between the narrator and the reader. Fictional footnotes create a powerful critical interlocutor to the main text with an ambiguous status, which forces the reader to scrutinise the main text and to question it from a distance. Their position, their nature and the role they play in the fiction lead the reader to stop and reflect more deeply on language, on the act of narrating and on the act of reading.

CONCLUSION

Inside the eighteenth century, *Tristram Shandy* was, from the publication of its first instalment, a novelty and a puzzle, and also, curiously, representative of its time. It remains so in many ways to this day, as new annotated editions of the book appear regularly, and scholars of all nationalities still ponder upon the problems it raises. *Tristram Shandy*, which stretches the limits of the evolving eighteenth-century English novel and of novel-writing to this day, is seen by George Poulet as 'le plus grand roman du dix-huitième siècle [...] en tous cas celui qui incarne le mieux la variété sinueuse de la pensée qui est le trait le plus évident de l'époque'.¹

This study has analysed the destabilising effects of the reading process Sterne forces his reader to adopt in *Tristram Shandy*. It has drawn comparisons with the reading process experienced in some chosen fictional works of the eighteenth century. Furthermore, the thesis has sought to highlight the variety of approaches that the novels studied take in their treatment of narrative progression in time and space. Finally, the thesis has proven how the fictional use of paratext not only in *Tristram Shandy*, but also in *A Tale of a Tub* and in *Tom Jones*, extends in time and in space the boundaries of the fictional text both on the page and in the reader's imagination.

The thesis has observed that the reader's absorption of his own time and space in the fictional world depends on several key factors. To that end, it has highlighted and justified the importance of the principal tenses used in the narration, the pace of the narrative, and

¹ Georges Poulet, *Les métamorphoses du cercle* (Paris: Plon, 1961), p. 77.

the complexity of the temporality of the narrator and the characters. It has also concentrated on the degree of sequentiality, continuity and resolution in the progression of the narrative, the clarity of the borders between the different diegetical levels, the type of narrator chosen and the relationship he establishes with the reader.

This study has noted that the reader's absorption in the fictional world is made easy in a text such as *Moll Flanders*, which is in the past tense, with one main narrative voice and perspective, which offers a clear sense of direction with a continuity of the plot in time and space, and a relatively quick narrative pace, the summary. The reader's absorption is deepened by a slow narrative pace, with a large number of scenes in direct or reported speech, as in *Tom Jones* and *Clarissa*. The reading experience is enriched when characters are given an elaborate temporality and an inner life, as in *Clarissa*. It is made more difficult in *Tristram Shandy*, where digressions and interruptions make the reader jump from topic to topic, and metalepses carry him from one diegetical level to another without warning or defined boundaries. When the metalepses occur between the world of the characters, the world of the storyteller, and the world of the reader, they destroy the referential illusion, and direct the attention of the reader away from the story and onto story telling. The thesis has offered a detailed analysis of the various types of metalepses in *Tristram Shandy*. It has shown how the chronotopes of the various parties (narrator, characters, narratees and fictional readers) intermingle and influence each other, and how that complex set of interactions transforms the reading process.

The thesis has also analysed the complexities of the reading process resulting from a narration mainly in the present tense. To that end, this study has concentrated on extradiegetical, self-conscious narrator-pseudo-authors who stress the 'I, here and now' of enunciation. Such a narrator can be found in *A Tale of a Tub*, *Tom Jones*, *Tristram Shandy*,

and *A Sentimental Journey*. The thesis has underlined the similarities and the differences between the narrators of these fictional works, and has studied their relationship with the reader. It has scrutinised the effects on the reader of novels moving away from perfect referential illusion, as in *Clarissa*, to try and create the illusion of the narrator as travelling companion, as in *Tom Jones*. The thesis has analysed in detail how the narrator-reader companionship offered in *Tristram Shandy* differs from that of *Tom Jones*. It has examined the illusion of simultaneity between the life of the characters, the act of writing, and the reading process created by the overpowering use of the present tense in *Tristram Shandy*. It has shown how this tense strikingly gives the illusion that Tristram, his characters and their environment, his fictional friends and readers, are endowed with an eternal and almost tangible life. Nevertheless, the thesis has demonstrated that Tristram the iconoclast destroys this illusion of simultaneity, and it has analysed how such a use of the present tense impacts both on the progression of the narrative and on the reader's perception of the act of reading.

Along with its study of the use of the present tense, the thesis has explored numerous other techniques in *Tristram Shandy* which prevent the narrative, and as a consequence the reading process, from following a continuous and sequential line of progression towards a conclusion. These techniques seem to free the stories told and the protagonists from the succession of time and the space they occupy. The thesis has argued that, in *Tristram Shandy*, the structuring function held by the plot on a time-line in other novels is replaced by an impression of polyphony in the mind of the reader. This phenomenon happens between numerous voices belonging to different chronotopes and diegetical levels in the main text, and between the various voices in the main text and a variety of pseudo-editorial voices in the footnotes. These techniques give a spatial dimension to the text and to the meaning which emanates from it. In *Tristram Shandy*, the configuration of the text can still

happen in a progressive way, as some stories develop and are relayed. Yet the games with the narrative, the techniques of characterisation, and the use of fictional paratext, break up, distort and almost wholly interrupt any progression on the line of time, and, as a result, only allow the process of configuration to be partial and often contradictory. Pictures form in the reader's imagination, fragments of sentences and scenes linger in the reader's mind often for pages on end, never to be resolved. The reader's attention is drawn to details, to the mechanisms of writing and reading, and not to the broad and complete picture of the tale in hand. Sterne does not hide the artificiality of the writing process and, in doing so, he successfully engages his reader by laying bare the devices which usually create the novel's referential illusions.

The reader's perception of the act of reading itself is transformed by Tristram's narrative. As so many narrative techniques prevent the reader from a progressive and continuous intake of information in his reading, he is reminded that reading is not a linear, smooth and continuous process, but that there is a constant movement back and forth in time and in space, that an effort must be made to make sense of what is written. Rather than destroying meaning, Sterne makes one more aware of the power of language to create meaning. The progression of the narrative in *Tristram Shandy* strays away from the continuous, sequential, and chronological line of development which would bring the reader to a meaningful resolution. This, together with the eccentric nature of the narrator-pseudo-author and his manipulation of time, space and diegetical levels, impacts upon the reader's fundamental expectations when reading a work of fiction: those of plot, characterisation and relationship between narrator and reader. The thesis has strongly argued that, in two key ways, the reader of *Tristram Shandy* not only needs to revise his

perception of the act of reading, but that he has to proceed to a repositioning of his expectations when opening a work of fiction, and to a change in his reading methods.

Firstly, the reader who expects a guide in his journey through the book quickly realises that he is faced with an unreliable narrator. The sudden changes in narrative lines and diegetical levels confuse the reader just as the unfinished stories, the leurrés, the gratuitous teasing of the reader and the puppet-like manipulation of the characters prevent one from concentrating on the narrator as an instrument of configuration of the story. Instead these techniques bring the reader's attention onto the bare materiality of the book. Tristram's constant battles between comedy and tragedy, between life and death, between frantic movement forward and sterile repetition, between overachieving and underachieving, all prevent the reader from understanding him as a strong pseudo-author in control of his material. Moreover, as argued in the fourth chapter of the thesis, the unresolved dialogue between the main text and undermining pseudo-editorial footnotes contribute to depriving the narrative voice of its authority. The absence of a reliable narrator in *Tristram Shandy* raises questions in the reader as to why he may feel the need to find a narrator he can trust in fiction, and how the challenges set by an unreliable narrator can enable him to transform his experience of fiction. For instance, by searching for evidence and links in what he reads by himself, by retaining his balance in his progression through a destabilising journey, and by questioning the validity of what he reads rather than taking it at face value, reading becomes a more active and inquisitive process.

Reading *Tristram Shandy* goes against normal reading reflexes. When one comes across a reliable narrator, one is ready to trust him and go along with him in the direction he chooses and to accept his authority. On the other hand, when faced with an unreliable narrator, one is tempted to mistrust him and to search for one's own path through the book,

using the material and the clues at hand. Yet, the reader of *Tristram Shandy* cannot use his logic and faculties of deduction to guide his progress through the book, because, as the thesis has demonstrated, the destabilising nature of the narrative does not allow him to do so. Tristram's narrative is not meant to be ordered and pieced together by a methodological reader who could then feel proud of his achievement. Indeed, the thesis has argued that the frustration in reading Sterne's book cannot be overcome: the games with the reader are not meant to be resolved. The reader finds himself powerless without the narrator in a book where the conversational nature of the narrative is coupled with an insoluble bond between the pseudo-author's life and his writings. As a consequence, the reader of *Tristram Shandy* is faced with a paradox, as he has no choice but to abandon himself completely to the hands of the narrator, however unreliable he is, and to travel with him, through the meanders of his creative mind.

Secondly, the reader who associates meaning with plot and resolution is thrown off balance by the high level of disruption in the continuity and progression of the narrative in time and in space and by the absence of conclusion to many stories and to the book as a whole. As the thesis posited in the first and developed in the third chapter, most chronological landmarks in *Tristram Shandy* are not here to help but to confuse, and the rules of grammar are systematically manipulated and distorted. The reader is required to ask why he wishes to find in fiction the sequential and causal organisation he expects from historical and factual narratives. The reader of *Tristram Shandy* is drawn to the realisation that life itself does not present events with a logical series of causes and consequences and that he will not get acquainted with people in the orderly way one might expect of history or biography. As Iser suggests, it is his memory which reorganises experience and finds

meaning in it.² In that case, the reader may question whether the aim of reading fiction in order to escape into a more organised, complete, meaningful and reassuring world is not too reductive for such a powerful creative tool as the novel.

From the insight gained by this study, one can safely come to the conclusion that Sterne imbued his narrator with the quasi-malicious knowledge of the needs of his readers' analytical and critical minds. Then, one can then see how the pact of reading between pseudo-author and reader is turned into an extremely successful game of teasing and frustration, basing itself on the reader's needs for order, sequentiality and meaning, and on his deep fears of chaos and of the final interruption, death. By providing a precise if disordered chronology, endless promises for follow ups and conclusions, attractive unusual topics for his stories and attaching characters, Tristram takes his readers on a ride, but not the methodical and reassuring ride Fielding's narrator offers in his *Stage Coach*. In *Tristram Shandy*, as the thesis has shown, form and content do not go along together in a parallel and harmonious way; they are made to compete for primacy, and they are never satisfactorily reconciled. The ride on which Tristram takes his reader shows off the potential of the novel by stretching its capacities in all directions and often up to breaking point.

² See Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), p. 125.

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